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'Roger Bagnall has done an enormous service to the study of late antique and Byzantine cultures with this volume.'
David Frankfurter, Review of Biblical Literature

'This is an excellent collection of essays ... As a whole, the volume covers an extremely wide range of topics across the entire scholarly spectrum of research into Byzantine Egypt, while each contribution successfully offers lucid and penetrating analyses of specific topics. This book will quickly and deservedly find a wide readership among all those interested in Egypt in the Byzantine world, and will no doubt serve as a helpful spur to future research.'
Bryn Mawr Classical Review

Cover illustration: mosaic floor in the Church of St. Stephen, Umm al-Rasas, Jordan, showing the cities of Egypt. Photograph from *The Mosaics of Jordan*, p.219, ill. 345 courtesy of Michele Piccirillo.

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ISBN 978-0-521-14587-9

Bagnall

Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700

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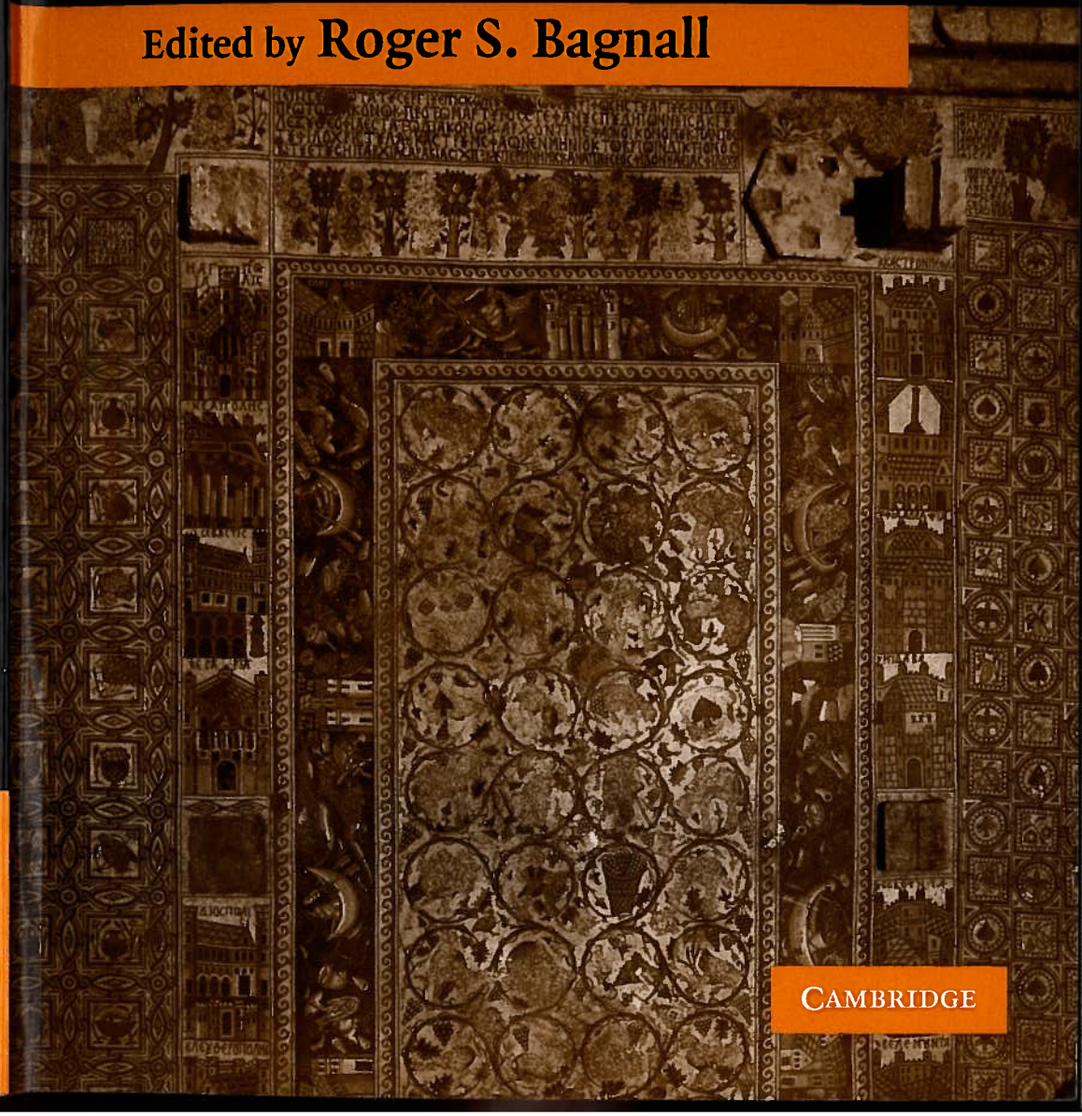
Edited by **Roger S. Bagnall**



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521871372

First published 2007
First paperback edition 2010

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-87137-2 hardback
ISBN 978-0521-14587-9 paperback

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Preface

This book began life as the papers given at the annual Byzantine Studies Symposium of Dumbarton Oaks in spring 2004. In planning the symposium, which was the first at Dumbarton Oaks devoted specifically to Egypt, I aimed to bring together speakers who could give the audience a survey of current research and views on as wide a variety of topics as possible. Inevitably, considerations of the symposium's schedule, balance, and budget prevented the inclusion of some topics or speakers. Some – but not all – of the resulting gaps have been remedied in this volume, and I am particularly grateful to those who agreed on relatively short notice to write these chapters. But it was the symposium that furnished the occasion and brought together most of the contents, and I must thank particularly the Director (Edward Keenan) and Senior Fellows of Dumbarton Oaks for entrusting me with the symposiarch's office for the year and subsequently allowing me free rein in shaping the resulting publication; Alice-Mary Talbot for her unfailing help and guidance in my discharge of that task; and Caitlin McGurk for her efficient and unobtrusive work in making a complicated event a pleasure for the participants. The learned audience asked many incisive questions and pointed us in directions we had not thought of, and they too deserve some of the credit for the result.

Much of the reading and reflection that went into writing the introduction took place during the fall semester 2004, during which I taught a course on Egypt from 300 to 700 while serving as visiting professor of Coptic Studies at the American University in Cairo. I thank my colleagues there, particularly Salima Ikram, for this stimulating opportunity. Most of the editing of the volume and the actual writing of the introduction were done during early 2005, when I was in the Dakhla Oasis directing Columbia University's fieldwork there as part of the Dakhleh Oasis Project. The suggestions of the Press's referees have been helpful at many points in shaping the book. The editorial work, then and subsequently, especially on regularizing the bibliographies, owes much to my graduate assistants, Jason Governale and Giovanni Ruffini.

Abbreviations

*Papyri and papyrological series and journals are cited according to *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, ed. J. Oates et al., 5th edn. (BASP Supplement 9, 2001) (also available online at: http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html); abbreviations for journals otherwise follow the usage of *L'Année Philologique*.

AE	*L'Année Épigraphique* (Paris 1888–).
CAG	*Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* (Berlin 1882–1909).
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*. 2nd edn. (Cambridge 1961–).
CGL	*Corpus glossariorum Latinorum*, ed. G. Goetz. 7 vols. (Leipzig 1893–1901).
CIA	*Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Première partie: Égypte*, ed. M. van Berchem (Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale du Caire 52, 1894–1930).
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum* (Berlin 1862–).
Coptic Encyclopedia	*Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. A. S. Atiya. 8 vols. (New York 1991).
CSBE	Bagnall, R. S. and K. A. Worp, *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt*. 2nd edn. (Leiden 2004).
CSCO	*Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*.
FHN	*Fontes historiae Nubiorum*. 4 vols. (Bergen 1994–2000).
I.Philae	*Les inscriptions grecques de Philae*, ed. A. Bernand and E. Bernand. 2 vols. (Paris 1969).
OCA	*Orientalia Christiana analecta* (Rome 1923–).

P.Berl.Arab. II	*Arabische Briefe des 7. bis 13. Jahrhunderts aus den Staatlichen Museen Berlin*, ed. W. Diem (Documenta Arabica Antiqua 4, Wiesbaden 1997).
P.Cair.Arab. I-VI	*Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*, ed. A. Grohmann (Cairo 1934–62).
PG	*Patrologiae cursus completus, series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1844–91).
P.Heid.Arab. I	*Papyri Schott–Reinhardt I*, ed. C. H. Becker (Heidelberg 1906).
P.Khalili I	*Arabic Papyri: Selected Material from the Khalili Collection*, ed. G. Khan (Oxford 1992).
PL	*Patrologiae cursus completus, series Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris 1844–79).
PLRE	*Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris. 3 vols. in 4 (Cambridge 1971–92).
PO	*Patrologia Orientalis* (Paris 1907–).
P.Prag.Arab.	'Arabische Papyri aus der Sammlung Carl Wessely im orientalischen Institute (Orientální Ústav) zu Prag', ed. A. Grohmann, *Archiv Orientální* 10 (1938): 149–62; 11 (1939): 242–89; 12 (1941): 1–112; 14 (1943): 161–260.
RCEA	*Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* 1, ed. Ét. Combe, J. Sauvaget, and G. Wiet (Cairo 1931).
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (Leiden 1923–).

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Roger S. Bagnall

Constantine's defeat of Licinius in 324 brought him control of Egypt along with other provinces previously controlled by his rival. After the foundation of Constantinople in 330, Constantine directed Egypt's wheat taxes to the 'New Rome' rather than the Old, and Egypt thereafter was for more than three centuries a part of the early Byzantine world. For most of that time, from 324 until 617, Egypt was largely free from external threats and internal revolts; except for its role in Heraclius' successful usurpation from Phocas, the dramas of imperial succession were played out elsewhere. Internal political turbulence, however, was common, often in connection with religious developments. Ammianus Marcellinus, for example, describes violence in Alexandria during Julian's reign, when pagans felt freer to attack Christians, but the destruction of the Serapeum by a Christian mob three decades later (391) was not much different in kind. The murder of the philosopher Hypatia in 415, although hardly a momentous political event, was emblematic.

Byzantine rule over Egypt was temporarily ended in 617–19 by a Persian invasion, leading to a decade of Persian rule before the restoration of Roman government in 629. This invasion is said to have been accompanied by widespread massacres and devastation, of which there are echoes in the documentary sources, but detailed knowledge of the decade of Persian rule is scanty. Only ten years later the Arab commander 'Amr led a small force into Egypt in late 639. Although he initially made rapid headway, it was only after substantial reinforcements that he was able to defeat the Romans in a pitched battle at Heliopolis (July 640), take the fortress at Babylon (Old Cairo) by siege, and finally negotiate the surrender of Alexandria by the (Chalcedonian) patriarch Cyrus (late 641, effective in September 642). Apparently a substantial exodus of officials and the upper classes followed, although the Byzantine general Manuel recaptured the city briefly in 645 before the final Arab takeover in 646.

Far more prominent in our Christian sources than any of this political history is the long series of struggles over doctrine and power in the church, both engaging Egypt deeply in the ecclesial life of the empire and eventually marginalizing the province to a considerable degree. The first of these conflicts to have important international repercussions was that between the Alexandrian bishops and the followers of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius, a struggle that intersected with imperial politics throughout the fourth century and forms the main action of Athanasius' long (328–73) reign as bishop of Alexandria. That reign included five periods of exile, two abroad (335–7 and 339–46) and three largely in hiding in Egypt (356–62, 362–4, and 365–6). Although mainly successful in moulding the Egyptian church into a united and centrally controlled body, he fared poorly for the most part on the larger political scene, and his weak successors did no better.

The high water mark of Alexandrian influence in the larger church came with the patriarchate of Cyril (412–44), who used the first Council of Ephesos in 431 to depose Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople (428–31). The council was fought on the field of the use of the term *theotokos* (God-bearer) for the Virgin Mary, which Nestorius opposed. Apart from the emotional evocation of devotion to the Virgin, the controversy involved important Christological differences, with Cyril's position stressing Christ's identity as God, his divinity. This position was characteristic of the long Platonist tendency of Alexandrian theology to stress the divine Logos against the humanity of Christ, but the term *theotokos* was used by both sides in the dispute for divergent purposes.

Cyril's successor Dioskoros I (444–58) tried a similar coup at the second Council of Ephesos (449), removing bishops Flavianus of Constantinople and Domnus of Antioch from office; this time, however, the papal delegates were left unheard and unhappy, and Pope Leo denounced the council as a 'Robber Synod', as it has been known ever since. The new emperor, Marcian, convened a new council at Chalcedon in 451, and this time Dioskoros was not in control. Leo's *Tome* held the day doctrinally, and Constantinople gained politically by achieving virtual parity with Rome. Dioskoros was condemned both for his refusal to accept the Chalcedonian formula of the hypostatic union of two natures in one person and for the arbitrariness of his exercise of power in his own see. From this point on, there were usually two contending bishops of Alexandria, one supporting the Chalcedonian formulations, most typically with imperial support, and the other maintaining Dioskoros' miaphysite position.

The period from Chalcedon to the accession of Damianus in 578 was formative for the ultimate character of the Egyptian church. Some emperors

(especially Anastasius, 491–518) were of miaphysite sympathies or at least neutral, but at other periods there was severe pressure for conformity to Chalcedonian views. One result was Egyptian closeness to the Syrian miaphysite church, which was more consistently pressed by the emperors, but another was a much diminished likelihood that theological works in Greek written elsewhere would circulate in Egypt or be translated into Coptic. The long and complex relationship of the Egyptian church with that of Syria led at times to the flight of Syrian clergy to Egypt. Severus of Antioch (*c.* 465–538), for example, spent the last twenty years of his life in Egypt and had substantial influence. A generation later, Jacob Baradaios built an alternative, anti-Chalcedonian, hierarchy for the church after the reign of Justinian.

The last Chalcedonian patriarch of Alexandria before the Arab conquest, Cyrus, led a concerted effort to enforce conformity to the imperial, pro-Chalcedonian, will. The memory of Cyrus was correspondingly execrated in the post-conquest miaphysite church.

The place of Egypt in the Byzantine world is thus an old and contested theme. It was already an important issue in Egypt itself in the wake of the Arab conquest. The various Christian factions and the Arab government all had reasons to portray Egypt as alien to the empire, whether – in the case of the Christians – to position themselves as loyal subjects with no wish to find themselves once again under Roman rule or – in the case of the Arabs – to claim the high ground as liberators who had rescued the Egyptian Christians from persecutions. The emergent Coptic church staked out its claim to possess an innate character as oppressed, resistant, and made up of martyrs, at all times and under any regime.[1] This self-portrayal was taken all the way back to Roman persecution, and even for the period after the peace of the church it could be supported with such episodes as the imperial mistreatment of the archbishop Athanasius during his struggles against the Arians, not to speak of the ouster of the patriarch Dioskoros at Chalcedon and all that followed.[2] Periods like the ascendancy of Cyril, in particular his victory at the first Council of Ephesos, could be seen as exceptions to the pattern. Most historiography rooted in the Coptic tradition has swallowed this view whole: the 'Copts', we are told, were hostile to Roman rule and thus alien to its culture.[3]

Indeed, the stakes were raised in the aftermath of the conquest by the beginning of what has become the perennial debate over whether the 'Copts'

[1] See Papaconstantinou (forthcoming). [2] Davis 2004.
[3] *Coptic Encyclopedia* III: 682–3 (Atiya on Cyrus) and II: 375–7 (C. D. G. Müller on Benjamin I) for some typical formulations.

aided the Arab invaders against the Byzantine government because of the popularity of anti-Roman views among the Egyptian population. Whatever the trustworthiness of the sources that suggest such collaboration[4] as an explanation of the conquest, this hypothesis is unneeded. The weakening of the Byzantine empire by the struggle with Persia during the preceding several decades, the small size and poor quality of the Roman garrison, a divided command structure, shaky military financing, and loss of control of the lines of supply and communication by land through Syria and Palestine to the Arabs in the years immediately before the invasion of Egypt provide sufficient explanations.[5] But the hypothesis is still alive even outside sectarian circles and in a different context, as we can see in Jairus Banaji's recent materialist variant. Banaji suggests that the increasing stratification of the distribution of wealth in the fifth to seventh centuries left the lower classes with little stake in the established order, and thus every reason to prefer the invaders.[6] Whether this assessment of attitudes, reminiscent of the Rostovtzeff of the *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, is correct, we have little way of knowing. But it was not the collaboration of the landless labourers that the invaders would have valued; rather, they needed, and to a large degree got, the help of the governing classes.

Certainly Egypt and the Byzantine centre were not disconnected from one another in the last two centuries of Roman rule, as we can see from a host of details about the traffic back and forth between them visible in the papyrus documents. Constantinople needed Egypt and kept a close eye on its administration (chapter 12 below). Imperial officials were formally welcomed by locals who were not Chalcedonian in confession, using poems written by people like Dioskoros.[7] Wealthy Egyptians – and not just the consular Apions – sometimes lived in Constantinople.[8] Monks travelled to take care of property transactions in the capital, just as villagers sent embassies to defend their rights.[9] Little of this connectivity is visible in the literary sources, but the documents bring this web of small-scale links back into view.

It is a striking fact that in modern scholarship the term 'Coptic' has tended to dominate work in some areas, above all art; by contrast, 'Byzantine' has dominated the more classically oriented disciplines of papyrology

[4] Rejected by Butler in the first edition of his *Arab Conquest of Egypt*; P. M. Fraser, in the supplement to the reprint edition (Butler 1978), rather seems to prefer the collaborationist view. See chapter 21 below for discussion of this issue.

[5] Kaegi 1992. [6] Banaji 2001. [7] Fournet 1999. [8] *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397.

[9] *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397 is also evidence for monastic agents in Constantinople. The archive of Dioskoros of Aphrodite is our best evidence for village delegations in the capital.

and history, the term being taken back even to 284, the accession of Diocletian, in typical papyrological usage. The church becomes 'Coptic' even in works dealing largely with events before Chalcedon and with a string of Hellenophone archbishops.[10] 'Late antiquity' has been a useful concept in bridging the chasm and in emphasizing the connection of this Egypt to the ancient world, but the problem has not gone away.[11] In presenting a volume on Egypt in the Byzantine world, what do we mean, and how is such a phrase to be construed in the face of the making of a Coptic Egypt?

The reality of both the sources and what we can recover of the underlying society and culture is naturally more complicated than any of these labels would indicate, neither tidily arranged nor obliging to those who are intent on such position-taking. This volume explores that complexity. Although religious affiliation (mostly, but not exclusively, along the Chalcedonian divide) is one critical axis and particularly in the period after Justinian helps to elucidate many things, we must resist any call to adopt such affiliations as the universal lens to explain things, especially before 641. We always have to ask if Christology is relevant and what other factors may be equally or more so. Uniformity is also not to be assumed, either across Egypt or within particular groups. Certainly it is absent from the positions taken in this book by the various authors. On some questions it seems to me that we can see the beginnings of something like a consensus, but there are many points that remain controversial within these covers, let alone in the rest of the scholarship. Partly for this reason, and partly because so many of the methodological trends visible in the volume are still only partly developed, it is doubtful that the subject is yet ripe for a full-scale synthesis. In this introductory essay, I speak for myself and not for the other authors, although it will be obvious (and emphasized by internal references) how much of what I have to say depends on the scholarship in their chapters.

It is perhaps in the nature of a multi-author volume of finite size that it will neither cover all subjects nor offer a unified description of the source material, however useful this might be to some readers. Many of the individual chapters devote much of their attention to the source materials available and the critical problems they raise. Indeed, such explorations are a recurring theme. Certainly Byzantine Egypt offers an enormous quantity of source material, perhaps more, and more varied, than for any other ancient society. The range includes many types of manuscript evidence, from letters, school exercises, accounts, lists, contracts, official documents,

[10] Davis 2004.

[11] There is of course the problem of how late we take 'late antiquity' to go. In Bagnall 1993 I used it specifically for the first part of the period treated here.

and much else on what was intended to be ephemeral material supports of writing with very limited audiences. It also embraces much originally destined for a rather wider public, sometimes in autograph form, more often in later but still ancient copies: sermons, Paschal letters, chronicles, proclamations, saints' lives, martyrdoms, theological treatises, the Bible, graffiti on monastery walls or auditorium seats, public inscriptions. There is a substantial body of artistic and archaeological material also, much of it 'Christian' but hardly all.

The sources present two sets of problems. One comes from the inherent difficulty of evaluating their significance, of understanding the circumstances in which they were created and which must govern our use of them as evidence; that theme runs through many of the chapters in this book, perhaps nowhere more strikingly than in Arietta Papaconstantinou's consideration of the different chronological strata of hagiography and the interests they represent (chapter 17 below). There are also of course many deficiencies, some apparently irremediable, in the evidence. One of the most notable is the near-lack of papyrological documentation from villages once one passes the middle of the fourth century, flagged by both James Keenan (chapter 11 below) and Raffaella Cribiore (chapter 3 below) as a limiting factor in their studies. And there are deep and seemingly intractable problems in the publication of the sources, many still not available in usable printed editions, and above all in the handling of the information from archaeological excavations, many (perhaps most) of which remain either unpublished or only very partially reported. Still, we find significant progress in many areas to be possible by confronting types of sources generally kept separate; here again Papaconstantinou's chapter offers a salient instance, in this case bringing together hagiography and documentary evidence.

There are other respects in which the seeming limitations of the sources have been not so much inherent in the evidence as rooted in defects of scholarly training and perspectives, problems more amenable to solution. Two of these seem to me central. The first is the historic tendency for disciplines to be language-based and relatively insulated from evidence in other languages. One striking feature of this book is the extent to which the boundaries between Greek and Coptic, and even between Greek and Arabic or Coptic and Arabic, are no longer allowed to stand in the way of an integrated picture. Similarly, documentary and literary evidence is increasingly being treated together. The second is the introduction of conceptual frameworks now commonplace in historical scholarship but slow to enter the mainstream of philological disciplines. To cite just one instance, gender studies (see Terry Wilfong's chapter 15 below) allow new and illuminating approaches to evidence that otherwise has seemed unrewarding.

The cultural world of late antique Egypt emerges from the studies presented here as a distinctive place, but one with salient characteristics that fit into an integrated cultural system extending throughout the East and even, to some degree, the West. Rhetoric, philosophy, theology, law, and medicine were all areas in which Egypt was important to some degree at varying times, and it attracted students of these subjects from outside Egypt down to the end of Roman rule and beyond (see Cribiore's chapter 3 below). Archaeology, in the form of recent excavations at Kom el-Dikka, and texts both show that Alexandria's schools continued to operate for a half-century or so after the Arab conquest; the cultural unity of the eastern Mediterranean was not solely dependent on political unity. The Egyptians' special preference for poetry was recognized externally both by those who approved of it – and the fans of the Egyptian poets were obviously numerous enough for works like Nonnus' *Dionysiaka* to survive (Alan Cameron, chapter 2 below) – and by those who did not.

It was by no means only at these international levels and the upper social stratum that constituted them that elite culture was linked to the broader cultural, religious, and political character of the society. Even philosophy, the highest of subjects in at least its own estimation and certainly the most abstract, is in some cases to be read against the day-to-day background of a bilingual and religiously divided society, as Leslie MacCoull argues with respect particularly to John Philoponus in chapter 4 below. Imperial politics, of course, had a strong impact on most of the establishments of higher education, in some cases to the point of closing them (chapter 3 below).

For all that Coptic literature (Stephen Emmel, chapter 5 below) is sometimes presented as a counterweight to elite Greek culture, its considerable development through the period from the fourth to seventh century left it heavily dependent on Greek literature and the Greek educational systems for its highest forms. It is hard to imagine even Shenoute, the emblematic and original writer whose works survive to us in fragmentary condition, separately from his skills in a rhetorical tradition owed to a culture he spent considerable effort in denouncing. The strong sense of connectedness that we cannot avoid in the case of Shenoute occurs at many levels, at least down to that of people like Dioskoros of Aphrodite, where the bilingual character of his work and its tight interlock with the imperial law courts and imperial officials make the connections obvious.[12]

If we move from the realm of the word, where transmission of culture within a regional zone where Greek was a common language was at

[12] Fournet 1999.

its easiest, to the visual and tangible, a comparable blend of provincial individuality and incorporation into metropolitan culture can be found. Architecture, with its regional variations, has many links to the Byzantine world elsewhere; these are most marked in the North, but that is probably true in other domains as well (Peter Grossmann, chapter 6 below). How far such differences can be linked to confessional positions remains a matter of controversy, but Grossmann has maintained that such a distinction is visible at Abu Mina, with a miaphysite church outside the walls drawing on architectural vocabulary found in Upper Egypt but not in other eastern Mediterranean lands.

Textiles have long been the prisoner of a historiography that classifies them as 'Coptic', with all of the political, confessional, and social ramifications often attached to the term. In Thelma Thomas' work (chapter 7 below), they are restored to their position in the larger picture of late antique art in the Byzantine world, although the work of integrating them fully into that picture and discerning local particularities still leaves a substantial agenda ahead.

The visual vocabulary of Egyptian monasticism, in contrast, seems to offer a more difficult conundrum. Cell decoration of the kind attested in many places in Egypt, particularly in oratories, is not well known elsewhere in the Byzantine world. This, however, could be mainly the result of the fact that painted plaster does not usually survive in most places (see Elizabeth Bolman, chapter 20 below). On the other hand, it is also possible that specifically Egyptian theological positions may likewise play a role, as in the Egyptian monastic world after Theophilus and the Origenist controversy there was no substantial audience for an anti-anthropomorphite view. Here we have a sign of how the emerging distinctive character of Christianity in Egypt could have come to shape other cultural patterns. The difficulty of assigning a firm chronology to painting, however, makes it hard to pin this down with any precision; and it remains true that Origen was condemned much more broadly than in Egypt, making a purely Egyptian theological connection doubtful.

As Wipszycka remarks, there is nothing of consequence in Coptic literature that comes directly from pharaonic Egyptian literature; any reminiscences of an Egyptian past have been filtered through Greek literature. One would not make such absolute statement for visual and physical culture, but even there the axis of analysis is clearly across the early Byzantine world rather than back to Egyptian past. If one had to think of a single distinctively Egyptian cultural practice that might offer that sort of continuity in popular use, however, it would surely have been mummification.

Françoise Dunand (chapter 8 below) shows how even here there is change and reconceptualization, with even the seemingly most conservative of habits responding to an altered society. But change is inherently harder to recognize in most of our sources than continuity, in part because of their discontinuities.

As a place, of course, Egypt was distinctive. That is in some sense a truism, but Egypt's individuality was, as the ancients themselves recognized from early times, on a different level from that of other lands. It had from the Ptolemies onwards its single vast metropolis, the leading city of the East until it was eventually overtaken by Constantinople, although it is not easy to know quite when that happened in each domain beyond politics (see Zsolt Kiss, chapter 9 below). Despite its stature, however, Alexandria lost ground also to Antioch (as a regional political centre), and its subordination to Constantinople in political terms is of course evident already from the fourth-century founding of New Rome onwards. The existence of the praetorian prefect of Oriens must have to some extent limited Alexandrian direct access to the emperor, previously unimpeded by intermediate officials. The enormous and noisy prominence of the Alexandrian patriarchs in the Christological disputes of this period[13] should not obscure their inability to prevail over Constantinople when the latter had Rome backing it. Cyril won at Ephesos I, but Dioskoros' victory at Ephesos II was obtained by less subtle means and was readily undone with the next shift in imperial politics.

This megalopolis dominated the very numerous other cities, above all in the structure of the church (chapter 16 below), but in other respects as well. These cities (for which see Peter van Minnen, chapter 10 below), numbering something like fifty in this period, likely had a significant share of the population of their districts, the old nomes, by any pre-modern standard. Partly because of a lack of archaeological work, the picture of these cities depends disproportionately on the papyrological evidence, which is not unequivocal. These cities, in the Roman period and at least the first part of late antiquity, dominated the vast number of surrounding villages, the small agricultural settlements for which Egypt was traditionally much better known (see James Keenan, chapter 11 below). But there are signs that the late Roman structure, with all its centralization, may have started to break down in the sixth century. There are many candidates for destabilizing elements, ranging from the importance of the Great Houses to general economic decline or a poorly understood redistribution of resources, or even

[13] See now Wessel 2004.

to the increasing tendency of miaphysite bishops to reside outside the cities (chapter 16 below). The cities seem, however, to have remained prosperous and productive down to at least Justinian and (as it increasingly seems) to the Persians. The invasion of the latter was an important watershed, still poorly known in archaeology and the documents, and with a poverty-stricken literary tradition. How far the cities themselves really lost ground before the Persian invasion remains hard to say.

The villages certainly still had much life in them, even if they were not entirely viable as economic and social units apart from the specialized goods and services provided to them by the cities. As Keenan notes (chapter 11 below), it is hard to get a clear idea of their day-to-day existence except in the probably atypical case of Aphrodite, a former nome capital probably larger, more independent, and more diverse than most villages. But it is clear that the number of villages remained large, even with estate-linked subunits growing up in their periphery, and in all likelihood the growing role of the monasteries as rural centres transformed the geography of the countryside as time went on, creating new poles of activity.

This world of habitation resists generalization in various ways. At one level there is an impressive uniformity. This is the level at which the cities and villages were most tied into the imperial system. The government and military structures we find in the papyri and inscriptions are fairly uniform, although not entirely so (Bernhard Palme, chapter 12 below). Imperial law was, contrary to the view forcefully argued a generation ago by Arthur Schiller, widely known and deeply embedded in legal practice throughout Egypt, at least down to the level of notaries in the provincial cities and even villages, as one sees from Dioskoros and other cases (Joëlle Beaucamp, chapter 13 below). The penetration of imperial law was such that it involved even the manipulation or misuse of imperial legislation in local practice. And of course some areas of law were far more effective than others, especially in cases where enactments ran counter to deeply rooted social habits. There is no particular reason to believe that things were different in other parts of the empire, and there is absolutely no basis for imagining a storyline about 'Coptic' resistance to imperial law.

Much of this imperial framework survived the Arab conquest (discussed by Petra Sijpesteijn, chapter 21 below), including the mandated use of Christian invocations and years according to the fifteen-year indiction cycle in the openings of legal documents, even after the consulates and regnal years (also decreed by Justinian) had disappeared.[14] Equally striking is the

[14] See Bagnall and Worp 2004.

use of Coptic calques of Greek legal formulae in contracts drawn up by post-conquest notaries, showing that the legal framework of contractual life in the Egyptian population was not altered by the end of Roman rule.[15]

It has to be noted, however, that government and legal practice were also sites of local variation, a diversity favoured perhaps by the post-Diocletianic break-up of Egypt as a single administrative entity of the sort that it had been throughout the Principate. This division into subprovinces fostered differences in administrative and documentary practices. At the same time, the period was also characterized by some important changes in the distribution of political power inside Egypt, in particular by what has been described by some scholars as the rise of an Egyptian aristocracy of service.[16] At a minimum, the relatively simple structure known in the Principate, with a tiny number of high-level imperial administrative transients and a larger but still hardly numerous curial elite (perhaps 3,000 to 5,000 province-wide) was considerably diversified. Egypt saw the development of a more numerous resident imperial civil service (although still only a handful by any modern standard) and a hierarchy of the bishops with their staffs, distributed throughout the land, to balance the remaining governing stratum of the city notables. But the sources of these 'new classes' remain unclear. Wipszycka suggests that the clergy came mainly from the 'middle' class, and that is likely to be true for most of the presbyters and deacons. But in the absence of any specifically theological educational structures, the bishops at least must have had a typical Greek education, which was available only to the well-off. There is, moreover, some evidence (despite Banaji's contrary assertions) for the interpenetration of communal elites (both city and village) and the bureaucratic personnel; Palme (chapter 12 below) argues that the new bureaucrats were to a considerable degree recruited from precisely the old curial elite. At all events, the new polycentricity of administrative power is undeniable, and the increased competition among the various groups undoubtedly made things more complicated. But the fact that the individuals and groups involved in this competition resented it does not mean that it was a bad thing.

In the economy, there is no reason to think (as Keith Hopkins once claimed)[17] that late antiquity saw a sharp decline in the economic integration of the empire so visibly achieved through trade and taxes under the Principate; the contrary seems more likely to be true. Unfortunately, we have little evidence from the Delta, always the area best connected to the Mediterranean world, and particularly from the two key ports of

[15] Richter 2002. [16] Banaji 2001. [17] Hopkins 1980.

Alexandria and Pelusium, through which that trade must have passed. Pelusium, indeed, as not only a major port but the seat of a provincial governor, was undoubtedly a far more influential place than the documentary and literary evidence allows us to see. Excavations in the last two decades have started to give some sense of its scale and splendour.[18] It may well have been the case, however, that the once substantial trade with India, which passed through Egypt, was only a shadow of its former self.

The economies of the up-country cities and their hinterlands display considerable variety, to the extent that our highly concentrated evidence allows us to sketch any picture (see Todd Hickey, chapter 14, and van Minnen, chapter 10 below). This diversity is not merely a matter of a contrast between the supposed worlds of Oxyrhynchos and Aphrodite, with differing systems – respectively, an economy dominated by large estates and one with many village smallholders. Rather, even within the Oxyrhynchite there must have existed a difference between the parts dominated by the large estates and those not; the Great Houses did not, it seems, control most of the villages, about which we know very little.[19] There is thus even in the Oxyrhynchite no basis for generalizing Banaji's view that tenancy was displaced by a wage-labor economy. Whether his model can even be applied widely in the Apionic estates outside certain sectors seems uncertain. At the same time, it seems that Aphrodite had a large estate side-by-side with the smallholders.

Most descriptions of ancient economies give inadequate attention to the service economy. With the late Roman economy, one must be particularly mindful that the tax structure favoured this part of the economy against agriculture, which was more heavily taxed. As was the case even in classical Athens,[20] the 'invisible' economy offered significant advantages to counter its lower social prestige. Much of what the cities provided to the countryside belongs to the service economy. Among these compensations for the countryside's produce were justice, festivals, markets, exchange with the outside world, and specialized production from rural raw materials. It is particularly important to keep in mind that the church can be seen in such terms as well. What happened to society when the church received the rents on 15 per cent of the land, as seems to be the case in the tax register from Temseu Skordon (see chapter 11 below)? These revenues were certainly recycled into services of one sort or another, both liturgical and social.

[18] For the written evidence on Pelusium, see Carrez-Maratray 1999; cf. Grossmann (chapter 6 below) for the churches.

[19] Cf. also Ruffini 2005. [20] E. Cohen 1992.

The people of this society were linked in a variety of ways fostered both by hierarchy and by its absence. Where the Great Houses were at work, with their peculiar combination of private and public characters, the links at the top among the heads of these entities undoubtedly connected the people below them through hierarchical relationships – pyramids linked at the top; but equally there was a web of connection at the bottom, through the host of service employees in these organizations who knew one another, and through people who served more than one of the Great Houses. In less vertically structured environments, like that which we see in the Aphrodite papyri, groups like shepherds might provide unexpected links across elements that would otherwise have few dealings with one another. In general, these societies seem to display a high level of connectedness.[21]

Another major source of social connectivity was certainly the extensive festival life centred around the churches and the shrines of martyrs and other saints. This world, as Papaconstantinou shows (chapter 17 below), seems rooted in the cities in the fifth and sixth centuries. At some later point, still not well defined but perhaps in the second half of the sixth century, these cults undergo a transformation from mainly city-based to mainly monastery-based, and specifically centring around rural monasteries. Social relations at a more personal level still need much study, for which the documents and the writings of bishops offer a substantial body of material. In recent years, gender studies have provided some important tools for getting at patterns of behaviour masked or unnoticed in most previous scholarship. These approaches allow us to get a sense both of Egypt's potential distinctiveness rooted in history[22] and of changes coming about under the influence of new institutions. The most important of these was certainly the church, with its tendency to supervise moral behaviour through an activist clergy, something that was a complete novelty in ancient society (see chapters 14 and 16 below). Social change traceable through gender relations continues to be a noteworthy aspect of historical development after the Arab conquest, as Wilfong points out.

Naturally, the role of religion in creating the myth of a separate Egypt must lead us to look at it also in an attempt to discern a less united face. Egypt displays some marked differences from other lands, particularly in the centralization of the episcopal power in the hands of the archbishop of Alexandria and in a late development of the episcopate, perhaps in part a product of the late municipalization of Egypt's cities (see chapter 16 below). Looking into the history of Christianity in Egypt before the time of the

[21] Ruffini 2005; Ruffini forthcoming. [22] See Beaucamp 1990 and 1992, Bagnall 1995.

long-serving activist bishop Demetrius remains difficult, but even close observation of the situation under him and his immediate successors helps to give a sense of his challenges and opportunities.

The Egyptian clergy was in other respects probably much like what we see elsewhere. The individual character of the episcopate is no doubt related to the ability of the Alexandrian patriarchs to serve as foci in several key theological and ecclesial controversies and to the degree to which doctrinal disputes became eventually matters of national importance. But there were also divides inside the Egyptian church, which was not at all monolithic, even inside the miaphysite majority that comes into focus after Chalcedon.[23] And Alexandria's central importance was not entirely unparalleled; other capitals, most notably Antioch, were also capable of wielding the clergy of a region as a cohesive weapon at ecumenical councils. Later imperatives, as we noted at the start, led to construction of the past in an instrumental fashion and with a large degree of overgeneralization; it remains imperative that we resist that tendency. The transformation of the church in the later centuries is, as we have seen, reflected in the cult of the saints, which shows substantial change away from Chalcedonian-controlled centres rather than being an area in which continuity is everywhere (chapter 17 below).

Monasticism is certainly a special case in some respects, involving Egypt's prestigious leadership role – both in anchoritic and in cenobitic styles of asceticism – and its international reputation, leading to a considerable place in religious tourism. This monastic centrality itself became a subject of ideological construction as time went by, and the past was reshaped to offer both a judgment on the present and tools to influence it (James Goehring, chapter 19 below). But that past had always been, as Goehring notes, presented in idealizing and heroizing ways that served the purposes of the presenters, beginning already with Athanasius' *Life of Antony*. Change in this domain over the centuries was perhaps less than it seems at first, and possibly less than in the cult of saints, but it was still real, and both underwent similar imperatives to be made usable by a post-Chalcedon and then post-conquest present.

Egypt does offer a number of areas of religious practice that may seem at first specific to it, but these need careful disentangling to see what may really be Egyptian (as already remarked, possibly the contest over anthropomorphitism is a case in point, although Origen was denounced elsewhere too) and what is more general but simply better known in Egypt because of the nature of the evidence (see Bolman, chapter 20, and Darlene Brooks

[23] Davis 2004.

Hedstrom, chapter 18 below). We cannot allow ourselves to accept too easily the tendency of the sources, so visible already in the fourth century, to construct monasticism as something its readers will find different from themselves: Egyptian rather than Hellenic, heroic rather than ordinary, individualistic rather than communitarian, uneducated rather than learned, low-status rather than wealthy, a lifelong commitment instead of a middle-aged turn in life's course.

On the contrary, of course, there is plenty of evidence for all of the denied characteristics. There was Greek spoken and written in many, if not all, monastic settlements, and we see plenty of signs of wealth right from the start. Even the Shenoutean federation, the heirs of that father of Coptic literature, used Greek for internal correspondence a century or so after his death, as a newly published letter between Shenoutean women's monasteries now shows.[24] Cenobitic monasticism, indeed, eventually had as much of an impact outside Egypt as the more heroic anchoritic variety, not via Shenoute, but because Pachomius' rule was published in Greek and before long – in 404 – found Jerome for a translator into Latin. From this, it got the international recognition which Shenoute, writing only in Coptic, forever lacked.

For unlike Ephrem the Syrian, Shenoute never found a translator. It is striking, in thinking about all of the particularisms and commonalities that we have inventoried, to consider that one could trace a similar range of responses in the Semitic world of the Levant. But there was an important difference, which Shenoute's lack of translation brings to mind: the Syriac environment always seems less dependent on Greek than Coptic was, and yet it was also better integrated with it; translation was not a one-way street. Perhaps this is in part the product of the distinctive linguistic situation: Egyptian did not represent an international language, and it lacked a strong independent cultural and educational base, not to speak of any role in administration and the exercise of power, even after the conquest. And of course Syriac served a broader regional cluster of communities, becoming itself (like its progenitor Aramaic) an international metropolitan tongue like Greek and Latin, rather than only a relatively quarantined national one.

If one struck a balance between the 'Byzantine' and 'Coptic' sides of Egypt in AD 565, one would certainly notice the theological divisions, which were not unique to Egypt, and one might probably think there was still a chance of reconciliation (cf. chapter 16 below, where Wipszycka

[24] Jördens 2004.

inclines towards seeing Theodora's death as the watershed). But otherwise Egypt would appear as hardly more distinctive than other provinces. Its life participated in the broader currents of the empire almost without exception, and Greek was still overwhelmingly dominant in the written word. A hundred years later, this verdict would be significantly altered. Egypt had diverged in many ways, partly by the subtraction of some of the cultural elements found in the fourth to sixth centuries, partly by addition, partly by alteration.

In interpreting this shift, we need to ask if we see this change happening only in the period after the conquest (discussed in chapter 21 below) or as at least in part a development already underway in the sixth century, perhaps as a result of Justin II's less conciliatory policies and those of his successors, matched by an intransigent institution-building response on the Egyptian side. Or is it only in the seventh century that these changes really come about, possibly in part the result of the Persian invasion and its destructiveness, especially in the cities? Or are both important factors? As is often the case, documentary sources tend to give a sense of continuity in practice, but sometimes by ferreting out the context we may obtain a different view. The archaeological horizon of destruction assigned to 619 and the impoverishment after 629, impeding regeneration, are striking on the material side – if rightly dated. Literary sources, not of high quality from the point of view of directly historical information, give an increasing sense of crisis under Maurice, Phocas, and Heraclius. Pisentius, the bishop of Koptos, is a striking figure through this period (chapter 16 below), with his reflection of external events along with his own day-to-day focus on the needs of his flock. Nationalism is a doubtful interpretive concept for this emerging world, but was there an Egyptian consciousness detaching itself and reconstructing its past to justify such a detachment? If so, when did this come about? This is still a frontier for study.

One of the major foci for such an investigation that emerges from these papers is the relationship of city and country in the post-Justinianic period, and how it was affected by the developments in the church: the apparent centredness of miaphysite bishops and clergy in the countryside (Wipszycka, chapter 16 below) and the increasing role of the exurban monastic centres as bases for bishops and centres of pilgrimage and festival (Papaconstantinou, chapter 17 below). Whether these changes tie in with a more general decline of the cities, as some think (Alston 2002, Banaji 2001) is hard to say (van Minnen, chapter 10 below). All of these vectors perhaps were intensified by Arab conquest, when cities came into the hands of new rulers more readily than did the countryside.

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PART I

The culture of Byzantine Egypt

CHAPTER 2

Poets and pagans in Byzantine Egypt

Alan Cameron

The Egypt we are talking about in this book, the Egypt of late antiquity, was essentially a Christian world. Many scholars have indeed argued or assumed that there was a determined pagan resistance in some areas. The classic works here are a 1952 article by Roger Rémondon and a recent book by David Frankfurter.[1] At one time I was sympathetic to this view myself, but I am now more sceptical. Virtually all of what purports to be evidence either comes from triumphalist Christian texts, or concerns very small groups.

Let us take one example of each. Thanks to the survival of substantial excerpts from Damascius' biography of his teacher Isidoros,[2] we have a series of vivid sketches of the Neoplatonist philosophers of fifth-century Alexandria, many of them colourful characters who stuck to their paganism right down into the sixth century. We also have thousands of pages of their commentaries on Plato and Aristotle. Damascius' account is supplemented from the Christian side by Zacharias Scholasticus' biography of Severus, the future bishop of Antioch, written in Greek but only surviving in Syriac translation.[3] Many of these people made frequent trips between Athens and Alexandria and (to a lesser extent) Beirut and Aphrodisias. Thus there was quite a network of connections over the eastern provinces. Since we know so much more about these philosophers than any other group of late antique pagans, inevitably they have always featured prominently in modern accounts of the end of paganism.[4] The mere fact that we can actually name so many (in absolute terms a tiny number, of course) has often been thought to imply an organized pagan opposition. According

[1] Rémondon 1952; Frankfurter 1998; see too Wipszycka 1988: 138–64; and Kaegi 1968.
[2] For the Greek text, Zintzen 1967; for a somewhat rearranged and more reader-friendly text with facing English translation, Athanassiadi 1999; for a comparison of the two, see Robert Lamberton's review of the latter (2000).
[3] Kugener 1903. My translations are made from Kugener's French translation.
[4] Notably Chuvin 1990.

to Rémondon, for example, they provided 'la suprême résistance au christianisme'.[5]

The fact that they were an outlawed minority in a Christian world no doubt created a certain solidarity. 'One could call us fighters', remarked Proclus' teacher Syrianus, 'since we defend the best and most beautiful of philosophies from the charges brought against it.'[6] No mere traditionalists, they took the intellectual underpinnings of their convictions seriously. But some of those they were fighting were fellow pagans. They spent at least as much energy refuting each other as the Christians. Damascius can be very sharp about the shortcomings of his fellow philosophers: 'I have chanced upon some who are outwardly splendid philosophers . . . yet inside, in the things of the soul, they are poverty-stricken and lacking in true knowledge.'[7] His own writings are in constant polemic with the teachings of his most distinguished predecessor as scholarch of Athens, Proclus.[8] Most of these philosophers would doubtless have preferred to be able to worship their gods as they wished, but that need not mean that they formed a homogeneous pagan party (for a notable illustration of their lack of unity, see below on the Pamprepius affair). Here is Damascius on his own much admired teacher Isidoros:[9]

> It was clear that he disliked the prevailing circumstances [*ta paronta*, a code phrase among the Platonists for the Christian regime],[10] nor did he wish to abase himself before the statues of the gods. He was already moving towards the gods themselves, who are hidden within us, not in sanctuaries but in the very mystery – whatever this may be – of the completely unknowable.

This was a not uncommon attitude among philosophically inclined pagans. When one of his disciples became addicted to sacrifice (φιλοθύτου) and invited Plotinus to accompany him on a visit to the temples of the gods, Plotinus replied: 'they ought to come to me, not I to them'.[11] Pagans who thought like this about sacrifice, cult statues, and temples were likely to maintain their paganism quietly, in private. They were not likely to join any movement to reinstate sacrifice. No less important, how many of these philosophers were there? I would guess that there were never more than a couple of dozen active at any one time, and the last thing on their mind was proselytizing. Their main concern was to pass on esoteric knowledge to a small elite.

[5] Rémondon 1952: 63. [6] Syrianus, *In Metaph.* 81.8, ed. Kroll.
[7] *EP* 17 Zintzen = F 14 Athanassiadi, with *JHS* 113 (1993): 2.
[8] Athanassiadi 1999: 46. [9] F Ep. Phot. 38 Zintzen = 36A Athanassiadi.
[10] For other examples of this phrase, see Cameron 1969: 15.
[11] Porph. *Vita Plot.* 10 fin.; Porphyry admits that he was not sure what Plotinus meant by this. For further illustrations, Sheldon-Williams 1967: 513.

Next, the problem of triumphalist Christian texts. A much discussed case in urgent need of balanced reassessment is an incubation cult of Isis at Menouthis, a suburb of Alexandria that, according to Frankfurter, 'easily resisted' Christian authorities until the 480s. Rémondon wrote of the cult being 'en pleine activité', its clergy fully manned ('au complet').[12] We owe the story of its eventual destruction entirely to Zacharias' *Life of Severus*. It is a vivid and detailed narrative, rightly characterized by Kaegi (though not quite in the sense he meant) as 'very revealing'.[13]

How reliable is Zacharias? One recent believer in a vigorous pagan reaction praises him as a 'straightforward historian . . . intellectually sober . . . with intense psychological insight'.[14] But according to a critic more familiar with the background, the *Life of Severus* is not really a biography at all, but a pamphlet defending Severus against the charge of having once been a pagan. And a dishonest pamphlet too, since Zacharias, a student friend of Severus, knew perfectly well that he had indeed once been a pagan. Severus admitted as much himself ('when I was still a pagan . . .') in an early sermon which survives in two versions, one Coptic, the other Syriac. The Syriac version omits the passage in question, preserved in the Coptic version.[15] Nor could it be argued that Zacharias was misled by the Syriac version, since this very passage reveals that none other than Zacharias himself ('my friend the scholastic') was accompanying Severus at the time.[16] So even before we turn to the bias and internal improbabilities in Zacharias' account of the Menouthis Iseum, we know that we are dealing with a writer prepared to lie for his cause. Here is the story he tells.

A pagan philosopher called Asklepiodotos, an Alexandrian living in Aphrodisias, had a wife who was unable to conceive. One day he dreamed that Isis told him to try her shrine at Menouthis. He and his wife spent some time in Menouthis making sacrificial offerings, but she still failed to conceive. So the local priest (Zacharias claims) arranged for the couple to buy a child from a priestess in a neighbouring village, which they passed off as the result of a conception miraculously engineered by Isis. How do we know that the baby was bought? Because, under public interrogation before a jeering crowd after the destruction of the shrine, the priest 'admitted' it, together with a number of other 'crimes' (for example, that a wooden snake found in the shrine represented the serpent that had tempted Eve!).[17] Remarkably enough, modern scholars have simply accepted this improbable story as fact. 'Contrary to pagan claims,' wrote Christopher

[12] Frankfurter 1998: 40; Rémondon 1952: 70.
[13] Kaegi 1968: 251–4, summarizing Zacharias' account at length, apparently accepting every detail.
[14] Trombley 1994: 1. [15] Garitte 1966, esp. 335–43.
[16] Garitte 1966: 342–3. [17] Zach. *Vie de Sévère*, p. 36.

Haas, 'it was *proved* that the barren wife of a pagan philosopher did not miraculously conceive, but had simply taken as her own the illegitimate offspring of a priestess.' According to Garth Fowden, 'the couple succeeded in buying a baby from a priestess of Isis, but certain Christians *uncovered* the deception'.[18] According to Kaegi, 'Stephen the monk exposed this trickery . . . asking if the woman gave milk'.[19] Trombley wrote of Stephen 'demolishing' the fraud.[20] Zacharias does indeed represent Stephen as asking this question, but at no stage did anyone produce any proof. The pagans are said to have been indignant at the implied aspersion on the character of honourable people. Christians construed this response as implying guilt, but any innocent person accused of such a deception would just as reasonably have regarded it as an insult. Not that the inspection by 'a respectable woman' that Stephen recommended would have provided solid proof in any case. Given the widespread employment of wet-nurses, the woman might well have stopped lactating within a few days of giving birth.[21] The accusation of fraud is just that, an accusation, for which no proof was ever produced – or indeed could have been produced before modern times. It is also a most improbable accusation. If all Asklepiodotos and Damiane wanted was a child, they could have adopted one back home in Aphrodisias. But what they wanted was a child of their own.

It is understandable that Christian contemporaries were willing to assume that Asklepiodotos and his wife were liars, prepared to exploit even so deeply personal an issue as their long-frustrated desire for a family to create fraudulent propaganda for their religious beliefs. But we moderns should think twice before simply following suit. Asklepiodotos and his wife (Damiane, daughter of an Aphrodisian grandee also called Asklepiodotos)[22] are also known to us from Damascius, who describes both as people of high character. More importantly, in an unfortunately fragmentary sentence, he refers to Asklepiodotos 'taking his wife home with him when he saw that she was pregnant'.[23] Another passage refers to Asklepiodotos leaving his estate (sadly all debts) to his daughters (plural),[24] which implies the subsequent birth of at least one more child. Of course, it is possible that Damascius

[18] Haas 1997: 187 (my italics); Fowden 1982: 54 (my italics).
[19] *Vie de Sévère*, p. 19.9–20.2. [20] Kaegi 1968: 251; Trombley 1994: 7.
[21] On wet-nursing, see the useful study by Bradley 1986: 201–29. Soranus (*Gynaec.* 2.5.7–8) describes several ways of suppressing lactation for those who do not want to breastfeed. Not that lactation would have disproved the accusation beyond question, since it is possible for women who have not actually given birth to induce lactation.
[22] For the two 'Asclepiodoti', see *PLRE* II.160–2, and Athanassiadi 1999, Appendix II, pp. 348–9.
[23] ἐπίτεκα οὖσαν τὴν γαμετὴν συνεπῆγεν, Dam. F 95CD Athanassiadi; Ep. Phot. 137 with F 232 Zintzen.
[24] F 83B Athanassiadi = F 189 Zintzen.

was taken in by the imposture, or that he was lying as well. But instead of just swallowing the Christian line whole, let us compare the two versions critically. Suppose that Damiane did indeed give birth to a child within a year of her visit to Menouthis. In their excitement the couple will have told everyone they knew, less to promote the cult of Isis than out of sheer pleasure at finally becoming parents. But Christians could not possibly concede that Damiane had given birth to a child herself without giving the credit to Isis.[25] Since the couple undoubtedly had a baby, the only acceptable explanation was some sort of fraud; the priests must have got together to procure a baby from somewhere and pass it off as Damiane's natural child. Modern readers, familiar with the phenomenon of false confessions made under duress, should know better than to accept the priest's public confession. Yet Frankfurter goes so far as to infer from the mention of the priestess in another village who was supposedly the real mother that there was 'a kind of priestly network in the western Delta region'.[26] Rather we should note that, for all the circumstantial detail provided by Zacharias, he never claims that the 'real' mother was ever produced. The fact that she was identified as a priestess should only increase our suspicions about the entire accusation.

There is also a further complication. Zacharias implies that Menouthis was a pagan stronghold. But we know from Cyril of Alexandria that his uncle Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria from 384 to 412, built a church of the Evangelists at Menouthis, and that Cyril himself destroyed the temple of Isis and established a parallel Christian healing site, the shrine of Saints Cyrus and John, perhaps in 427/8.[27] So why does Zacharias not mention the fact that Isis had Christian competition in town? In order to explain his silence on this point some have argued (against the solid evidence of Cyril) that the shrine of Cyrus and John was not in fact built till after the destruction of the shrine of Isis in 489, others that it was overshadowed by Isis till 489.[28] It is *possible* that Cyrus and John proved unable to compete with Isis till 489, but this is perhaps unlikely with her temple razed to the ground.

There is also another possibility. Zacharias' source for this entire story was a formerly pagan student called Paralius, like Asklepiodotos of a rich

[25] Nowadays, of course, no one would be surprised if a woman who had gone through so intense an experience as sleeping in a shrine conceived naturally.
[26] Frankfurter 1998: 41.
[27] Sophronius, *Laudes in SS. Cyrum et Johannem* 29, *PG* 87: 3416; Festugière 1971: 217–37; McGuckin 1992: 191–9; Montserrat 1998: 256–79. For a study of miracle cures performed by SS Cyrus and John, see Fernández Marcos 1975, with a new text of the *Miracula* of Sophronius.
[28] Montserrat 1998: 256–79.

family from Aphrodisias. Believing in his pagan phase that Isis had helped Asklepiodotos' wife conceive, he went to Menouthis himself and sacrificed to Isis – or rather (Zacharias adds, hurriedly correcting himself) a demon who pretended to be Isis – who appeared to him too in a dream. When Isis failed to appear on a subsequent visit, Paralius became sceptical, and eventually (some time in 489) led the authorities to the shrine, claiming that he had witnessed the performance of sacrifices there. Many idols were found. The older ones were burned at once, and the rest loaded on to twenty camels and taken to Alexandria, where they too were burned after the public interrogation of the priest already mentioned, conducted in front of 'the entire population', who jeered and mocked the various pagan gods in turn.[29] Paralius told everyone that Menouthis was a hotbed of Isiac worship, with a lukewarm Christian population bribed to turn a blind eye. But the only documented clients of Isis in the 480s are two wealthy visitors from Alexandria, Asklepiodotos and Paralius himself. And Paralius only went because he had heard about Asklepiodotos. As for the frequent sacrifices Paralius mentions, he is not only the only witness, but one of the only two known clients who performed them. As for the many idols, once again we have only Paralius' word for it that they were objects of cult rather than the sort of mythological statues that stood in any of the older and grander houses in a town of any size, especially a prosperous Alexandrian suburb like Menouthis.

The only reason for rejecting Cyril's church of the Evangelists is Zacharias' failure to mention it. Zacharias said nothing about it (I suggest) because it did not appear in the self-promoting account provided by Paralius, a former pagan who saw himself as having redeemed his former sinfulness by single-handedly rescuing a town in thrall to demons. From Paralius' perspective, church authorities in Menouthis had done nothing to curb the growth of this cancer. He did not so much suppress mention of the church, as consider it irrelevant to his story. In any case, though not specifying a church of the Evangelists, Zacharias does refer slightingly to 'the clergy of the church of the village'.[30] As for the shrine of Isis, so far from having a 'fully manned clergy', on at least ten occasions Zacharias mentions just one priest. As for the cult being 'en pleine activité', on the extremely detailed description provided by Zacharias himself, the statues and altar were concealed behind a false wall in a building covered in hieroglyphs. For Frankfurter, this was obviously 'a temple or temple-chamber'.[31] Yet the most significant detail here is that Zacharias does *not* characterize

[29] *Vie de Sévère*, pp. 35–6. [30] *Vie de Sévère*, p. 30.18. [31] Frankfurter 1998: 164.

the building as a temple. In view of his obvious goal of maximizing the pagan threat to Menouthis, if he could have described an actual temple of Isis still open and flourishing, he surely would have. The hieroglyphs suggest a disused temple converted into a (no doubt rather grand) private house, lived in by a woman Zacharias describes (unsurprisingly) as a priestess. If anything, the passage provides implicit support for Cyril's claim to have destroyed the temple sixty years before.[32] When Paralius denounced the shrine to the authorities, he was asked 'whether he could point out the *hidden* pagan idols'.[33] Even if we limit ourselves to the information supplied by Zacharias himself, it seems clear that the 'shrine' of Isis at Menouthis was a very small, entirely covert operation. This does not suggest an 'entire village . . . dominated by pagans'.[34]

As for the blood-drenched altar Paralius mentions, even before the banning of pagan cult, mainly (though not entirely) because of Christian disapproval, blood sacrifice had been in decline among pagans, replaced by the burning of incense.[35] But many fifth-century Christians found it impossible to conceive of pagans as fellow human beings like themselves, living workaday lives, people who just happened to worship the divine in a different way. Pagans were fanatics who worshipped demons, hated Christians, wallowed in the blood of sacrificial victims, and even killed and ate Christian babies.[36] Sacrificing cattle was a messy, noisy business, best done out of doors. If the Menouthis priest really performed sacrifices (presumably at best chickens rather than cattle), this was surely because they were specially requested by the clients rather than the priest's regular practice.

The one detail in Zacharias' account that rings true is the violence of the Christians. Many such incidents are recorded, often giving rise in modern writings to inferences about the strength of pagan 'resistance'. Yet without exception it is the Christians who initiate the violence and the pagans who are forced to defend themselves. The most fully documented illustration is the destruction of the Alexandrian Serapeum in 391. A handful of pagans defended the temple against an onslaught by fanatical monks, but it was the monks who started it. Shenoute of Atripe, abbot for an incredible eighty years of the White Monastery, repeatedly led his monks in forays against (what he represented as) pagan strongholds. To take another illustration from Zacharias, according to Wipszycka there were groups of fanatical pagan students ready to do violence to their Christian fellows.[37] The source,

[32] *Vie de Sévère*, pp. 27–8. [33] *Vie de Sévère*, p. 27.6. [34] Kaegi 1968: 252. [35] Bradbury 1995.
[36] Even Frankfurter 1998: 20–1 was prepared to reject pagan cannibalism, but considered most other details in such stories 'credibly described'.
[37] Wipszycka 1988: 138.

once again, is Paralius, and while there is no call to doubt that he was roughed up by one or two pagan fellow students, Zacharias' own narrative makes it clear that it was Paralius who provoked the violence by pouring sarcasm and abuse on pagan gods.[38]

No one disputes that there were still a number of pagans left here and there in the Roman world down through the fifth and probably even sixth centuries, especially in the countryside. But survival is not the same as resistance. Despite occasional persecutions, most local authorities usually were willing to leave alone pagans who (in the words of a law of 423) were 'living quietly and attempting nothing disorderly or contrary to law'.[39] The fact that the occasional zealot launched a persecution need not imply that he was responding to a specific threat of active pagan resistance. The importance of a critical examination of Zacharias' version of the destruction of the Isis cult at Menouthis lies in the fact that it is the only such triumphalist story where we have enough independent evidence to show that it is closer to fiction than fact.

My concern in this chapter is with the secular, often called pagan, culture of the age. By culture, I mean essentially the literary culture people learned in school and, to a greater or lesser degree, reinforced and developed in later years. Inevitably, I mean the culture of the elite, the fairly small proportion of the population who had a culture in this sense at all. I do not intend to say much about schools as such. That is Raffaella Cribiore's subject. But there is one central point of perspective that needs to be underlined, another point on which I have changed my mind. During his brief reign, the Apostate Julian forbade Christians to teach the classics, on the grounds that no Christian who taught the pagan classics could be a good person, because he would be teaching texts he believed to be misguided and wicked. Obviously Julian understood the truth of the old adage that if you get 'em early enough, you've got 'em for life. In an article on Justinian's closing of the schools of Athens published in 1969, I wrote: 'it is truly astonishing that almost two centuries passed before a Christian emperor took the logical step of even attempting to forbid pagans to teach'.[40] It might well seem that, if they were serious about stamping out paganism, Christian authorities should not only have banned pagan teachers but introduced substantial Christian elements into the school curriculum, at least at the elementary level. On longer reflection I no longer find it surprising that they did not.

[38] 'Les élèves d' Horapollon . . . ne purent pas supporter les sarcasmes et les reproches de Paralius', which are fully illustrated: *Vie de Sévère*, pp. 22–3.

[39] *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.24, issued at Constantinople on 8 June 423.

[40] Cameron 1969: 10.

The fact that pagan deities and practices are prominently featured in some (by no means all) classical writings has led many scholars to assume that fourth- and fifth-century pagans could not fail to be conscious of the link between 'pagan' literature and pagan belief. But while it was natural for Christian readers of the classics to be struck by the frequent mention of pagan gods in (say) mythological epic, this was not why pagans themselves read such texts. And it certainly doesn't explain why so many Christians read such poetry – why mythological poetry actually saw a major revival in the Christian world of late antiquity. Much of the divine apparatus of ancient poetry bore little relation to living cult practice, and many of the divine immoralities endlessly pilloried by Christian polemicists were embarrassing to serious-minded pagans, who did their best to rationalize or allegorize them away. Pagans usually referred to the classics as 'the old writers'. Even Christians often used unpolemical terms like 'secular' books, authors, or literature, sometimes characterizing knowledge of the classics as 'external' or 'foreign' wisdom, literature 'of the world' rather than literature of faith.[41] While a few extremists condemned all classical literature, for most Christians it was quite literally the culture of the world. The Christian community of late antiquity never developed or even contemplated an alternative Christian educational system, whether at the primary or secondary level, and the reason is plain. The traditional grammatical and rhetorical education was felt to fill the secular needs of society well enough. Changing the educational system would have entailed changing the definition of culture, which would have meant nothing less than the definition of the elite. The traditional system had the irreplaceable practical advantage of having established standards that were accepted in every corner of the Roman world. What we misleadingly call 'pagan' culture fulfilled an overwhelmingly social function.[42]

Most people are familiar with the story that two Christian teachers, the Apolinarii, father and son, rewrote the various books of the Bible into epic poems, Platonic dialogues, tragedies, comedies, and so on, so that Christians could learn the truth and the classical forms simultaneously. The story is told by the two mid-fifth century ecclesiastical historians Socrates and Sozomen, writing less than a decade apart.[43] But not everyone has noticed that they differ radically in their assessment. According to Sozomen,

[41] For such formulas (ἡ ἔξω(θεν) or ἡ θύραθεν (φιλο)σοφία or παιδεία and the like), see Cameron and Long 1995: 35–7.

[42] I shall be dealing with this subject at much greater length in my forthcoming book, *The Last Pagans of Rome*.

[43] Socr. *HE* 13.16; Soz. *HE* 5.18, with my discussion in Cameron 1982: 282–5.

this stuff 'was equal in character, diction, style, and structure to the most celebrated books of the Hellenes', and 'if men did not admire antiquity and hold dear that which is familiar, they would (I believe) praise the efforts of Apolinarius equally with the ancients and learn them by heart'. Yet Socrates dismissed these works as 'of no more importance than if they had never been written'. An intelligent Christian, he explains, will read both scripture and the classics; scripture for its divine message, the classics, in part for their educational value, in part to help us understand and refute at first hand the folly of the Hellenes. That is to say, scripture teaches us the truth, but does *not* instruct us in the art of reasoning, which enables us to resist those who oppose the truth. Fake classics like the stuff the Apolinarii churned out serve no purpose, while reading the true classics helps us to outwit pagans with their own weapons. Whether or not this is just a rationalization by an educated Christian who loved them, the preservation of so many of the classics by the Christian Byzantines proves that he was not alone.

The point is illustrated in a different way by Gregory of Nazianus.[44] Gregory is best known for his oratory, but he also wrote an astonishing amount of classicizing verse, some 18,000 lines, in fact. Its importance lies precisely in the fact that, though obviously a theologian and rhetorician rather than poet, Gregory nonetheless chose to write so much of his work in classicizing verse. He more than once explains this choice. In a poem *On His Own Verses* he claims that he did it for the benefit of the young:

> especially those who take pleasure in literature, to provide them with a sort of sweet medicine that will lead them to believe what they need to know, softening by my art the bitterness of my instructions.

He says much the same in the preface to his autobiography (nearly 2,000 iambic trimeters):

> Verse-making is pleasant as a medicine for low spirits and, by sugaring the pill of instruction for young people, it also makes sermonizing enjoyable.

The image of sweetening bitter medicine is best known to us from Lucretius, but it goes back to Plato and was surely a commonplace of didactic poetry. Yet it is remarkable to find a bishop using it to sweeten the pill of Christian teaching. Though addressing the people of Constantinople throughout, this poem at any rate cannot have been publicly performed, since Gregory wrote it in retirement in Cappadocia. But since its purpose was to offer an elaborate justification of his unsuccessful period as bishop

[44] A. Tuilier, G. Bady, and J. Bernardi have recently published the first volume of the first modern edition of Gregory's poems: Tuilier, Bady, and Bernardi 2004; see Cameron 2004a: 333–9.

of Constantinople, obviously a subject of great importance to him, it was undoubtedly meant to be read there. And, paradoxical as it might seem, Gregory seems to have thought that writing it in classicizing iambics was the best way to ensure the widest possible distribution.

Gregory's poems are in a variety of metres, hexameters, elegiacs, and iambics, with iambics often used for what we might categorize as didactic poems, a widespread but little studied development of the age.[45] In a recent article I collected a mass of information on the long-known but insufficiently analyzed fact that classicizing poetry saw a remarkable revival in late antiquity, actually invading areas previously monopolized by prose.[46] One case brilliantly studied by Louis Robert is epigraphic dedications honouring magistrates and local worthies. The sort of honorific texts that in the early empire were written in formulaic prose are now regularly put into verse, highly classicizing and often surprisingly elegant verse, adorned with classical reminiscences.[47] Public demonstration in the form of a rhetorical declamation or the recitation of a poem was regularly rewarded by a post in the administration or a provincial governorship. The reason is simply that men of culture were thought to have an authority that won general respect. To put it in old-fashioned terms, *paideia* bred leadership. The reason poetry qualified a man for office no less than rhetoric is that poetry, classicizing poetry, was *paideia* in its most concentrated form.

The genres we encounter most often are the panegyric or encomium, and mythological poetry, in two forms: epic saga, and local saga. There is no need to say much about the encomium, a genre taken more seriously now than it was a generation or two ago. Most Greek verse panegyrics of the age have perished, except for the survival of a few fragments on papyrus, but the survival of Claudian's suffices to give a good idea of their general character. Panegyric was probably the most useful item in the repertoire of the wandering poet. Claudian is the outstanding example, an Alexandrian Greek who wrote in Latin as well as Greek. But the now obscure Andronicus from Hermopolis offers, geographically speaking, a more varied career: he wrote a panegyric on his fellow townsman the *comes* Phoibammon; he is attested in Scythopolis in Palestine and in Constantinople, where he studied with Themistius; he wrote a panegyric on a praetorian prefect in Antioch; and finally he tried his hand in Rome, receiving a letter from the orator Symmachus.[48] Clearly he went from strength to strength as he travelled around the empire.

[45] Cameron 2004a: 333–9. [46] Cameron 2004a.
[47] Robert 1948. [48] For the facts, *PLRE* I.65–6.

The modern reader usually finds the mythological poetry of the age more appealing. But narrative epics, such as Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*, are less interesting in the present context than local sagas, the mythical origins of cities. Claudian wrote *Patria* (as they were now called) of Anazarbus, Berytus, Nicaea, and Tarsus; a century later Christodorus of Coptus (to judge by his name a Christian) *Patria* of Aphrodisias, Miletus, Nakle, Thessalonica, and Tralles.

Every one of these poems is lost without trace, but a faint echo of the sort of learning that went into them is provided by a funerary epigram by Christodorus preserved in the Anthology, identifying the mythical founders of both Epidamnos and Lychnidos. Here are the first few lines:

> This tomb covers John, the star of Epidamnos, a city founded by the famous sons of Heracles . . . The renowned fatherland of his [John's] pious parents and himself was Lychnidos, a city built by Phoenician Cadmus . . .[49]

The foundation of Epidamnos by Phalius 'the Heraclid' from Corinth goes back to Thucydides,[50] but no surviving source names Cadmus the founder of Lychnidos. It may nonetheless have been a long-standing local tradition.[51] Claudian's *Patria* are likewise lost, but something of the subject matter of his poems on Berytus, Nicaea, and Tarsus is presumably reflected in the long sections on the foundation of those cities in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*.[52] In fact Nonnus is full of such local traditions, as, to a lesser extent, is Quintus' *Posthomerica*.[53] There can be little doubt that such poets travelled from city to city, producing *Patria* in return for payment, or at any rate recognition of some sort. They no doubt started out in their native cities. The Egyptian Horapollon wrote *Patria* of Alexandria, and Hermeias *Patria* of Hermopolis (his native city), both in iambics. Two fragments of an evidently different *Patria* of Hermopolis (because in hexameters) have been identified on a fourth-century papyrus.[54]

Classical scholars are likely to trace these *Patria* back to the *Ktiseis* of Hellenistic poets. But anyone who has worked through the local history section of Jacoby's *Fragmente* will be aware, first that the greater part of such works consisted of what we would call mythology; and second, that almost all were in prose. These late antique *Patria* are best seen as another example of poetry colonizing an area previously dominated by prose.

[49] *Anth. Pal.* 7.697.1–6.
[50] Φαλίος Ἐρατοκλείδου Κορίνθιος γένος τῶν ἀφ' Ἡρακλέους, Thuc. 1.24.2, with Hornblower's commentary.
[51] For such local traditions, see Cameron 2004b.
[52] Chuvin 1991: 148–54, 176–82, 196–224.
[53] For Nonnus, Chuvin 1991 *passim*; for Quintus, Robert 1980, index p. 451 s.v. Quintus de Smyrne.
[54] Piccardi 1990: 14–29.

Anyone who has read Christopher Jones' *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (1999) will appreciate how much mythical ties and kinship meant to Greek cities throughout the ancient world.[55] To what extent people believed such stories is unclear. Many were treated pretty much as history. It might have seemed likely that their appeal would wane with the Christianization of the Roman world, given the central role played by the old gods and goddesses. Not so.

Though I was naturally aware of the continuing appeal of mythological saga in Byzantine times, it came as something of a surprise to me, when researching my recent book on Greek mythography, to discover just how much mythological information is preserved in the scholia on the classical poets, all written by Christians. In general they offer a mythical 'story' for almost every person, place, and even plant the poets mention. They use the poets, in fact, as little more than pegs on which to hang stories they felt their students should know. Unlike modern commentators, they have no interest at all in explaining how the poets actually used mythological allusion. In addition to the commentators on the classics, an ever-increasing number of papyrus fragments from mythographic handbooks have turned up over the past few years. These handbooks are of a very low literary and intellectual level, which no doubt explains why so few have come down to us complete, but they were obviously very common and widely used.

The reason why even Christian schoolboys devoted so much attention to Greek mythology is obvious enough. If you didn't know the stories you couldn't understand most of the allusions in the poets, or orators, or even historians for that matter. You would also be in the embarrassing position of not understanding the scenes represented on the mosaic floors and wall paintings in your cultivated friends' houses, or on the silverware on their tables at dinner.

Much mythological art cannot be dated. But mythological scenes on late antique silver plates can sometimes be dated very precisely by official stamps to as late as the seventh century, by when craftsmen and patrons alike simply must have been Christians.[56] Most such scenes are surely traditional and decorative, appreciated by sophisticated patrons who could identify the subject matter. But this is not to say that classical myths *never* carried a deeper meaning. In fact they could sometimes have a serious purpose without it being specifically religious (whether pagan or Christian). One remarkable example is a series of paintings or mosaics in some public building in early sixth-century Gaza described by the Christian rhetor and

[55] See too Cameron 2004b: 224–8.
[56] Dodd 1961; Leader-Newby 2004.

biblical scholar Procopius of Gaza: the stories of Phaedra and Hippolytus, Theseus and Ariadne, and some episodes from the Trojan cycle, mainly involving Menelaus, Paris, and Helen. It is clear from his introduction that Procopius sees these paintings as a warning of the dangers of sexual passion: 'Eros and the arrows of Eros fly everywhere and transfix everyone. Not even Zeus is free when the Erotes will it; but he who is high and mighty, "whose strength is not to be resisted", longs for Semele and chases after Hera and appears as a bull to Europa and navigates the sea steered by Eros.'[57] This is a moral purpose of which all Christians would approve, but it is expressed in wholly pagan or (better) secular terms.

In an article I published exactly forty years ago, I drew attention to the remarkable fact that a large number of the poets of late antiquity came from Egypt, and not Graeco-Roman Egypt's traditional culture centre, Alexandria, but Upper Egypt, more precisely Panopolis.[58] I think we have to assume that most of these poets received at least their primary education in Panopolis. The most remarkable, and in some sense the founder of the school, is Nonnus, author of a massive forty-eight-book *Dionysiaca*, just a little longer than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined (not by accident, I think). Despite being included in its entirety in the Loeb series (with a very effective translation by W. H. D. Rouse) as early as 1940, Nonnus is still not as well known as he should be. A collaborative Budé edition with useful introductions and notes has just been completed in eighteen volumes, with the first (1976) and last (2003) prepared by Francis Vian, who has done so much over the years for late Greek poetry. Not only is the *Dionysiaca* a highly entertaining work in its own right, but it is also the most influential epic poem since the Hellenistic age. Every poet with literary pretensions who came after fell under its spell.

Other prominent members of the fraternity are Cyrus of Panopolis and Olympiodorus of Thebes. Then there is Pamprepius of Panopolis, whose date of birth is known to the minute, thanks to the identification of his horoscope.[59] He was no more than a name till large parts of what may be a couple of his poems were recovered in a major papyrus find.[60] There are also many lesser lights, to whom I drew attention in my 1965 article. But in that article I made the mistake of seeing both Nonnus and many, indeed most, of his fellow poets as pagans. Frankfurter has recently pushed my first thoughts much further than I intended even then, by characterizing

[57] See the edition by P. Friedländer (1939); Liebeschuetz 1995. [58] Cameron 1965.
[59] Delatte and Stroobant 1923; Neugebauer and Van Hoesen 1959: 140–1; the text of the horoscope is reprinted in full among the testimonia in Livrea 1979: 2–5. For his career, *PLRE* III.825–8; Kaster 1988: 329–32.
[60] Now best read in Livrea's Teubner edition of 1979.

them as 'priestly poets'.[61] This is to be misled by their mythological subject matter and classicizing style.

The only one of these poets we can confidently identify as a serious pagan is Pamprepius, who won the favour of the powerful general Illus in Constantinople, and was later involved in Illus' rebellion against Zeno, a rebellion that contemporaries believed was inspired by paganism, a view still repeated by some modern historians.[62] According to E. Stein, the Neoplatonic circles that still existed in several cities, though numerically small, would have been sympathetic to a pagan revival. Our best and main source for these Neoplatonic circles is Damascius' *Life of Isidoros*. Pamprepius was the bête noire of Damascius' book, 'a beast even more contorted and rabid than Typhon himself'.[63] The failure of Illus' revolt resulted in the persecution of philosophers in Alexandria, for which Damascius seems to have blamed Pamprepius even more than the patriarch Peter Mongus.[64] There can be little doubt that Pamprepius visited Alexandria (and perhaps other cities too) in an attempt to win support for the rebellion, evidently circulating oracles that foretold its success. He told pagans that Illus would be tolerant of, perhaps even 'restore', paganism (whatever that could have meant in a Christian world). But whatever promises Pamprepius may have made on his behalf, Illus himself was a Chalcedonian, and insofar as there was any religious factor in his revolt, it consisted of opposition to Zeno's compromise Henotikon. Any promise of favours to paganism would have alienated all Christians, and there cannot have been nearly enough pagans left to justify this. The philosophers of Alexandria were hardly a group worth cultivating. The only text that makes any such claim for the rebellion does so on the dubious authority of Paralius, once again as reported by Zacharias the Scholastic. After becoming a Christian, Paralius tried to convert his two pagan brothers in Aphrodisias by reminding them

> how many sacrifices we pagans offered in Caria to the gods of the pagans, when we asked them, those so called gods, while dissecting livers which we examined by magic, to tell us whether, with Leontius, Illus and Pamprepius and all those who rebelled with them, we would conquer the emperor Zeno of pious memory. We received a multitude of oracles and promises as well that Zeno could not withstand their attack, that the time had come for Christianity to disintegrate and disappear, and that the cult of the pagans would return. However, events proved that the oracles were as deceitful as those Apollo gave to Croesus the Lydian and Pyrrhus the Epirote.[65]

[61] Frankfurter 2000: 278 n. 13. [62] Stein 1949: 23–4; Haas 1997: 326; Chuvin 1990: 96–100.
[63] Damascius 112A Athanassiadi. [64] On the persecutions, Athanassiadi 1999: 24–9.
[65] Zach. *Vie de Sévère*, p. 40 Kugener (the English translation in Chuvin 1990: 99, much adapted).

The combined mention of oracles and Pamprepius by someone who was a student at Alexandria in the 480s proves nothing about Illus' intentions. All it proves is that Paralius and his brothers believed Pamprepius' oracles. Damascius' hatred of Pamprepius was no doubt heightened by the persecutions, but was not entirely retrospective, to judge from his remark that his own teacher Isidoros ignored Pamprepius and treated him as an abomination.[66] The relevance of all this to the poets of the age is that we should not see Pamprepius' paganism as simply a natural consequence of being educated in the schools of Panopolis. The historian Malchus remarks that he openly paraded his paganism, giving rise to suspicions that he practised magic. Theophanes too says he was accused of magic practices and calls him a sorcerer (γόης).[67] The frequent references to his oracles and prophecies[68] prove that this is more than Christian prejudice, and he was clearly anathema to pagan philosophical circles in Alexandria. Pamprepius was not a 'typical' pagan, and we should not treat him as a yardstick by which to judge the other poets from Panopolis.

The best-known surviving product of the Panopolis school is (of course) Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*, an enormously detailed account of the adventures of Dionysos, ending with his apotheosis. The pervasive sensuality and astrological preoccupation of this extraordinary work has often in the past been held to prove its author a convinced pagan. The fact that he is also credited with a paraphrase of St John's Gospel in the same style has traditionally been explained as an act of repentance for the *Dionysiaca* after conversion. This is the usual explanation invoked when we find both Christian and apparently pagan works credited to the same writer. Another much discussed case is Synesius of Cyrene, whose secular writings show no trace of Christianity. Synesius too has often, mistakenly, been assumed a pagan converted late in life.[69] Many other cases have been adduced, and while it may occasionally be the correct explanation, it is usually worth exploring other possibilities.

To return to Nonnus, some important recent studies by Francis Vian have turned the traditional picture upside down. We now know pretty much for certain that the *Paraphrase* came first. Unless we make the improbable assumption that he started out a Christian and converted to paganism,

[66] See the texts quoted by Zintzen 1969 p. 239 and Athanassiadi 1999 p. 275.

[67] F 20, with Blockley 1981: 77, against Cameron and Cameron 1964: 319; Theoph. pp. 128.11 and 130.7 De Boor.

[68] In addition to texts quoted above, add οἱ Παμπρεπίου χρησμοί in Damascius Ep. Phot. 171, p. 236.7 Zintzen = F 113 L, p. 272 Athanassiadi.

[69] Cameron and Long 1993, chapter 2.

interpretation of the *Dionysiaca* must in future proceed on the assumption that its author was a Christian. This discovery has wide repercussions. Nonnus did not just sprinkle his verses with mythological comparisons, as so many poets do. His subject matter is 'pagan' to the core: forty-eight books devoted to the story of Dionysos.

It used to be assumed that he was not just a pagan but positively anti-Christian.[70] Many scholars argued that Nonnus portrayed Dionysos as a rival of Christ. One line always seemed to leap out of its context:

Βάκχος ἄναξ δάκρυσε, βροτῶν ἵνα δάκρυα λύσῃ
Lord Bacchus has wept tears that he may wipe away man's tears.

This line (*Dion.* 12.71) seemed the more striking still once Joseph Golega spotted that both thought and formulation were borrowed from Cyril of Alexandria's commentary on St John's Gospel (425–8), a work Nonnus had studied carefully when writing the *Paraphrase*. On the assumption that he wrote as a pagan, it was naturally tempting to read this as a polemical proclamation of Dionysos as a suffering redeemer. But the context cannot possibly support so extravagant a notion: Dionysos grieves for the death of his young friend Ampelos, who is turned into a living vine-shoot. For all its trappings, this is simply an old-fashioned aetiology. For all its Christian resonance, the line in question is just a formula that came naturally to the pen of a Christian, without any wider implications beyond its immediate context.

Dionysos is *not* portrayed as a saviour or redeemer. His mission is simply to bring men and (especially) women joy in the form of wine. He betrays no interest whatever in the afterlife. One striking passage proclaims that the only relief for mortals burdened with unbearable suffering is – getting drunk! There are countless references in the poem to pagan cults, rites, temples, altars, sacrifices, and statues, but all are literary and antiquarian rather than specific and devotional – as put beyond serious doubt by the fact that most of the terms Nonnus uses he had already used metaphorically of Christian rites in his *Paraphrase*.

Nonnus is not trying to portray Dionysos as a rival of Christ, nor is he even (as sometimes suggested) trying to assimilate Dionysos and Christ. Dionysiac imagery was pervasive in the ancient world, even in Christian art. To give one obvious example, there is conspicuous Dionysiac imagery in the account of the wedding at Cana in Nonnus' own *Paraphrase*. More startling is a textile now in the Abegg Stiftung in Switzerland, with a number of

[70] The next three paragraphs are adapted from my paper Cameron 2000: 180–1.

figures associated with Dionysos framed under a series of arches.[71] Attached to this textile and so evidently from the same source (presumably a tomb) were several fragments from a series of New Testament scenes. Surprising as it might seem, a Christian was buried with Dionysiac tapestries. None of this (of course) proves that Dionysiac iconography *never* has specifically Dionysiac, pagan connotations in late antique art. But if a forty-eight-book work entirely dedicated to Dionysos in a highly classicizing style turns out to have no real pagan content or purpose (and this is put beyond doubt by its enormous influence on the many Christian poets it inspired), Dionysiac scenes in highly traditional domestic contexts like silver plate and textiles are probably, in default of evidence to the contrary, to be read as decorative rather than devotional.

The real importance of the discovery that Nonnus wrote both his poems as a Christian is that, if a soft porn mythological epic like the *Dionysiaca* was written by a Christian, is there *any* work of this nature that we are obliged to assign to a pagan – or read as a genuinely 'pagan' work? A concrete counterpart to the prevalence of mythological poetry in late antique Egypt is the large amount of mythological sculpture that has been found over the years, most of it seemingly funerary.[72] At one time this too was read as proof of lingering paganism. Nowadays it is more fashionable to read it as Christian allegory, though another, no less plausible, possibility is that it was seen as purely decorative. It is easier to see mythological motifs on silver plate as 'mere' decoration than scenes depicted on funerary monuments. Whichever interpretation we pick (and of course we do not have to read every such monument the same way), it is undeniably odd that one of the most popular motifs in late antique Egyptian funerary sculpture is Leda and the swan.[73] As one among several possible literary counterparts, consider these lines from the epithalamium for a certain Matthew by Dioskoros of Aphrodite:

> Bridegroom, may your wedding be filled with the dancing of the Graces, with gently nurtured roses, with honey-sweet grape clusters; you are marrying a bride who is an enviable Ariadne . . . Bridegroom, bend your mind to love. Zeus himself in heaven, because of Europa's beauty, is known to have become a bull; for love of Leda he was esteemed a swan. Carry your Europa over the threshold, not over the sea; go to bed with your Leda, but don't worry about wings. Even revered Apollo has felt the sting of sweet-darting love, for out of his love for Daphne Apollo is always known as god of the laurel. Take your Daphne to wife, but she will not run away from you. Phoebus crafted many things, but he was not successful in love.[74]

[71] Bowersock 1990: 52–3, with colour photos at pls. 10–11. [72] See especially now Thomas 2000.
[73] Torp 1969: 101–12, with pls. 1–10. [74] Translation from MacCoull 1988: Poem H22, pp. 108–9.

Dioskoros, unquestionably a Christian, wrote in the second half of the sixth century. Christianity aside, he does not seem to have had any sense that the analogies of Europa and the bull, Leda and the swan, Apollo and Daphne were in any way inappropriate in an epithalamium. Oddly enough, incompetent art is sometimes more revealing than better stuff. Dioskoros evidently thought that his appeals to myth added classical dignity to his contemporary theme.[75]

What then do we make of this really rather extraordinary flowering of mythological, classicizing poetry in a Christian world? Obviously it is a testimony to the power of the classics. It is also evidence of a very tolerant attitude to the pagan past. But I think there is more here too. Gregory's feeling that he would get his message across better in iambics or hexameters suggests that the elite of this new Christian world were reluctant to leave their classics and their mythology behind. So far from representing a lingering paganism, I suspect that mythological art and poetry helped many educated people to embrace a Christianity that did not involve rejecting too much of the past. Not the least important aspect of the relation between poet and community in late antiquity is that, by keeping alive the forms and motifs of classicizing poetry, and above all by reviving mythological epic, they eased the transition from Hellenism to Christianity.

But this brings me back to my earlier caveat that this sort of culture is above all an elite phenomenon. Take mythological themes on the silver plate of the age, or the mythological textiles that have survived in such numbers thanks to the dry Egyptian climate. A cultivated person would at once identify, with some satisfaction, a Dionysiac procession, or Andromeda chained to the rock, or Meleager killing his boar. But a peasant or a monk would see only naked bodies, monsters, and demons. Similarly, if a peasant or monk heard or read the names Zeus, Leda, or Danaë, he would think demons, not an elegant mythological allusion.

On a number of occasions Shenoute and his monks attacked the houses and demolished the statues of rich people he calls Hellenes. The combination of apparently pagan poets issuing forth from the schools of Panopolis and Shenoute's denunciations of Hellenes there has led to the assumption that pagan cult was still thriving in and around Panopolis. But in the light of the realization that the 'paganism' of the poets was more literary than cultic, we need to be more careful in our identification of Shenoute's Hellenes. While 'Hellene' was undoubtedly the basic Greek word for pagan in late antique and Byzantine times, it was nonetheless a word rich in

[75] On Dioskoros' use of the Phaethon myth, see MacCoull 2003.

ambiguity. The usage goes back to the age of the Maccabees, when the hostile world of the gentiles was represented by the Macedonian Seleucids, ethnic Greeks. Christians took over the term because it encapsulated early Christian hostility to Greek culture, already adumbrated in Paul. But it never entirely lost its cultural and linguistic connotations. In default of any evidence to the contrary outside Shenoute, I suggest that the rich 'Hellenes' he led his monks against are not so much dedicated pagans, indeed perhaps not pagans at all, but cultivated landowners, members of the elite who knew Greek and read the classics. They were suspect, not because they were known to be practising pagans, but simply because, having had a traditional Greek education, they spoke Greek rather than Coptic, liked statues of Leda, Europa, and the like, and were serenaded in classicizing verse full of such imagery by poets like Dioskoros.

The suggestion is not new. Twenty years ago Janet Timbie suggested that, for Shenoute, Hellene was 'sometimes a code word . . . for a hellenized Egyptian of the upper classes'. Trombley firmly repudiated the idea that it was no more than a 'cultural issue' that separated Shenoute and his followers from the landed magnates they kept attacking, arguing that this would not explain his 'rabid behavior'.[76] But what I am suggesting is not so much that Shenoute was unable to distinguish between culture and cult, but that he did not believe there was such a distinction. Nor was he alone in such a puritanical attitude. Glen Bowersock has drawn attention to a revealing passage in a homily of the late fifth-century Syrian priest Jacob of Serûg.[77] Jacob is indignantly describing the mythological themes of the pantomime shows that were all the rage in contemporary theatres: Ares and Aphrodite, Leda and the swan, Danaë and the shower of gold, and so on, all of which he argues to be Satan's way of encouraging paganism. But he knew perfectly well that most of the spectators were by now Christians, and he goes on to reproduce their defence: 'It is a game, not paganism. What do you lose if I laugh? The dancing of that place cheers me up, and while I confess God I also take pleasure in the play . . . I am baptized just as you are.' Cultivated Christians like Nonnus and Cyrus would have been perfectly content with this defence. Not so Jacob: 'Who can wallow in mud without being dirty?', he grimly replies.

One of Shenoute's sermons denounces 'heretics and Hellenes' whose 'demoniac teachings' (he seems to be thinking of bird divination, still practised in fifth-century Egypt)[78] take us far from the truth. Some scholars

[76] Timbie 1986: 268; Trombley 1994: 241. [77] Bowersock 1990: 37–8.
[78] Cameron and Long 1993: 52. Nilus of Ancyra, *Ep.* 2.151, wrote to a *tribunus* called Lucius urging him to ignore bird omens.

have inferred from this passage that even Shenoute had some knowledge of the classics. But the illustration he gives is a poet who filled up a book with bird noises, 'tigs tigs, kouax kouax, making the sound of birds, which is why they called this book *The Birds*'.[79] He is alluding to Aristophanes' *Birds*, but the refrain he quotes comes, of course, from the *Frogs*. People were in fact still reading Aristophanes in Upper Egypt as late as the fifth century. Three fifth- or sixth-century papyri found at Hermopolis, Arsinoe and Oxyrhynchos respectively contain scraps from the *Birds*, one of them bits of the *Frogs* as well; and another papyrus from Oxyrhynchos rather more of the *Frogs*.[80] Dioskoros too may have had a copy. But it goes without saying that no one who had actually read either play could have read demons or divination into them. Yet however derivative, garbled, and misguided the allusion, Shenoute is nonetheless identifying a classical text with out-and-out pagan cult.

Shenoute's monks repeatedly claim to have demolished 'idols' in private houses of local gentry. Modern scholars have usually taken these claims at face value and identified the objects as cult statues and the houses in which they stood as centres of pagan resistance.[81] This emphasis on statues may be significant if we bear in mind that uneducated monks were not only unable to distinguish between cult statues and mythological art. They would have denied the very existence of such a distinction. In some cases at least they were probably raiding the sculpture gardens of well-to-do Christians.

So while it is fair enough to criticize modern scholars for failing to recognize that classically educated late antique Christians might continue to write mythological poetry, the fact is that unsophisticated contemporaries were likely to make the same simplistic assumption. One conspicuous example is that fascinating figure Cyrus of Panopolis. It is difficult to think of any Greek poet in any age who enjoyed a more remarkable public career: ordinary consul, holder of the praetorian prefecture and city prefecture of Constantinople simultaneously. If only we had more of his poetry. At the height of his success he was deposed, apparently on the grounds of being a Hellene, and shipped off to the bishopric of Cotiaeum in Phrygia. The fact that his punishment was being made a bishop hardly suggests that the charge of paganism was altogether seriously made. But that does not mean that it was not a very damaging charge, a charge that, unlike (for example) the accusation of heresy, could not easily be disproved. After all, it is a

[79] Amélineau 1907: 386. [80] Dunbar 1995: 19–20; Dover 1993: 76–7.
[81] Barns 1964; Frankfurter 1998: index s.v. Schenoute; Trombley 1994: 207–19.

charge that appears in all our sources. Later Byzantines certainly believed it.[82]

The best-known story about Cyrus bears repeating, not only because it is a good story but because it is very germane to the theme of this paper. When Cyrus reached Cotiaeum, he was at first reluctant to preach to his new congregation, a reluctance not unconnected (we may assume) with the fact that they had lynched their last four bishops. But he could hardly refuse to preach on Christmas Day, and did so on 25 December in the year 441. His sermon has been preserved in its entirety, perhaps the most remarkable and certainly the shortest ever delivered anywhere, at any time:

> Brethren, let the birth of God, our saviour, Jesus Christ, be honoured by silence, because the word of God was conceived in the holy Virgin through hearing alone.

It is tempting to suppose that this was intended as a joke, though in Cotiaeum of all places that would not have been prudent. But Cyrus is in fact alluding to the solution recently devised by Proclus, patriarch of Constantinople, to the delicate problem of the incarnation, a solution reflected in many a medieval painting by a thin line drawn from the mouth of the Holy Ghost to the ear of the Virgin. She conceived by hearing. Obviously Cyrus was not just a Christian, but a well-informed Christian, up-to-date in his theology.[83]

So why did some contemporaries accuse Cyrus of being a pagan? The answer is that this was an issue where contemporaries might differ in their judgment of what it meant to be a good Christian. Modern scholars who dispute whether this or that late antique poet was a pagan or Christian are usually satisfied once they feel they have made a strong case for their viewpoint. In the case of Nonnus, for example, the discovery that he wrote the *Paraphrase* before the *Dionysiaca* might be thought to settle the matter once for all.

At the time, however, the situation was more complicated. In the sophisticated circles of Antioch, Alexandria, or Constantinople, it was no doubt thought perfectly acceptable for a Christian to read, copy, and enjoy the classics. But if he was prudent he would be careful not to display his enthusiasm too openly. Not a few Byzantines were indicted for impiety. The margins of surviving texts are frequently peppered with exclamations like 'shocking', 'outrageous', 'disgusting', at suitable places, notably in copies of Lucian and the *Greek Anthology*. Such abusive comments, as that great scholar L. G. Westerink shrewdly remarked, 'besides relieving the critic's

[82] See Cameron 1982 for full discussion. [83] For the details, Cameron 1982: 243–5.

ambivalent emotions, had the twofold practical advantage of protecting both the owner and the book. The owner, if accused of too much interest in pernicious literature, would find it useful to have a written record of his better judgement.'[84] The compiler of the *Palatine Anthology*, obviously a true enthusiast, who among several thousand classical epigrams included 350 dedications to pagan gods and 650 erotic and pederastic epigrams, prefaces his collection with a handful of Christian epigrams, preceded by the heading: 'Let the pious and godly Christian epigrams come first, even if the Hellenes are upset' – for all the world as if he thoroughly disapproved of all the racy classical material he had so laboriously assembled.[85]

So what is my conclusion? I suspect that most of the classicizing poets of the late fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries were Christians, even those who wrote on mythological themes. They and their cultivated friends saw no inconsistency in reading and writing about mythology or even composing pretend dedications to the old gods during the week and then going to church on Sunday. They may even have read a bit of theology. Remarkably enough, Nonnus was undoubtedly familiar with Cyril of Alexandria's immense commentary on St John. But the less educated and the very pious may not have been so understanding.

In fact we can go further still. Despite Nonnus' *Paraphrase of St John* and study of Cyril of Alexandria, the monks of Panopolis, the same area of Upper Egypt that produced classicizing poets like Nonnus, would probably have denied that he was 'really' a Christian at all. One of the more distracting features of Frankfurter's thesis about the tenacity of traditional cults in Byzantine Egypt is his frequent appeal to 'analogies' from widely different times and places (most often twentieth-century Africa). It is (of course) just as easy to produce modern analogies that point in the opposite direction – for example, the willingness of twenty-first century American fundamentalists to brand as 'pagans' those who do not share their own views on subjects like abortion and evolution.[86] Even today, there are many who believe that only a fraction of those who profess Christianity will be saved at the Second Coming. Everyone else will be swept away, Catholics, Anglicans, Jews, Muslims, Democrats, indiscriminately.

The once hot topic of the so-called conflict between pagan and Christian culture has cooled somewhat in recent years. Many scholars, myself included, have stressed coexistence rather than conflict. I am sure that Nonnus himself felt no conflict between his poetry and his faith. Like

[84] Westerink 1972: 201. [85] Cameron 1993: chapters 5 and 6.
[86] The Rev. Jerry Falwell infamously blamed indigenous 'pagans and abortionists' rather than foreign terrorists for the 9/11 attacks on New York.

many modern academics, he no doubt moved in educated circles that took what today we would call their liberalism for granted. But for others, perhaps the majority, the conflict was very real. While classical culture helped educated members of the elite to accept a Christianity that did not make them drop too much of the glorious Hellenic past, for others, classicizing poetry and the old mythology remained flashpoints of paganism. This ambivalence was to run right through Byzantine civilization.

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CHAPTER 3

Higher education in early Byzantine Egypt: Rhetoric, Latin, and the law

Raffaella Cribiore

We may begin by looking at Egypt and education from the point of view of some illustrious outsiders. The philosopher Themistius, who lived in Constantinople in the fourth century, considered Egypt an exotic place, from which a student would return with some colourful tales.[1] The rhetor Libanius, who taught in Antioch in the same period, lamented that 'the city founded by Alexander', like other places such as Rome, Athens, and Beirut, attracted some of his students, to his detriment.[2] In a long digression, the fourth-century historian Ammianus surveyed Alexandria from the vantage point of its past glories but admitted that not even in his time (*ne nunc quidem*) were various disciplines neglected there. He mentioned medicine and philosophy as Alexandria's current claims to fame, but not literary or rhetorical studies.[3] Ammianus evidently could not anticipate the great flourishing of the city in later times. At the end of the fifth century, Zacharias the Scholastic, in his *Life of Severus*, presented a picture of a vibrant Alexandria, where young men from all over the Mediterranean studied grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy.[4] This chapter will give an overview of education in early Byzantine Egypt, trying to identify possible changes in pedagogy and in the curriculum. It will then focus on the study of Latin and Roman law, which became subjects of more urgency in the fourth century and later.

From Hellenistic to early Byzantine times, Greek education was rigidly structured in well-defined stages, though the roles of individual teachers are not so clear. At the risk of overgeneralizing, one can say that the elementary teacher, besides introducing students to simple mathematical operations, supervised the learning of the alphabet and syllabaries and made students copy lists of words and short passages of authors. The grammarian strengthened his pupils' knowledge of literature and grammar, and the

[1] *Or.* 27.337–8, Penella 2000: 171. [2] *Or.* 55.13.
[3] Ammianus 22.15–22; at 22.16.16, he mentions philological studies in the Hellenistic period with Aristarchus.
[4] Kugener 1903. The Greek text is lost apart from a few words that survive in the Syriac translation.

rhetor made them engage in rhetorical exercises of increasing difficulty with compositions (*meletai*) as their final goal.[5] Naturally a basic concept of continuity does not rule out the existence of possible discontinuities resulting from personal contributions of teachers and specific environments, or concerning individual students' identities and goals. A few changes in pedagogy started to become evident at the elementary level in the early Byzantine period. Students – girls as well as boys – spent more time than before trying to acquire good copying skills and focused their attention on individual letters of the alphabet at the expense of memorizing the whole sequence or the various syllabic combinations as they had done before. The tendency of education at this level to cater to practical needs and to activities that gave more immediate gratification is evident in both Greek and Coptic instruction.[6] Pupils passively copied texts of limited compass before being able to read them, and students of Coptic focused most conveniently on formulaic epistolary expressions. Such rudimentary knowledge was particularly precious for those who did not continue their education further but would use their limited copying skills in their daily lives. This example of education aiming at practical effects is not isolated but is part of a general trend towards specialization that is evident at higher levels of instruction and was to reach its peak in the sixth century.[7]

The most direct evidence for patterns of reading in late antiquity comes from the survival of fragments of literary texts. By this measure, a sharp decline is quite noticeable already in the fourth century in comparison with the high figures of the second and third centuries.[8] The fourth to seventh centuries show a progressive, but not as sharp, decline; a small increase in the sixth century is caused by the wealth of the Dioskoros archive. At the same time, one must keep in mind that the overall numbers of papyri (not only the literary) decline, rise, and decline again in this period in much the same pattern. If the figures are broken down according to find-spots, a flourishing literary culture appears in Oxyrhynchos, Hermopolis, Antinoopolis, and in some towns of the Fayyum, while other places start to disappear from the cultural map. Likewise, school exercises, which were also found in small towns and villages in the Roman period, are concentrated in large urban centres; but this observation needs again to be qualified by comparison with papyri in general, which do not stem from villages anywhere in Egypt after the fourth century with the limited exception of Aphrodite.

[5] See Cribiore 1996. On rhetorical exercises, cf. Cribiore 2001a: 220–44.
[6] Cribiore 1999: 279–86. [7] See Cameron 1998: 683.
[8] I am following Morgan 2003: 150–1, who takes into account figures from the version of the *Leuven Database of Ancient Books* (*LDAB*) current when she wrote.

Education was structured along traditional lines for the elite students (mostly boys) who attended the schools of the grammarian and the rhetor. Habits of rather pedantic attention to specific points in a text at the expense of context, and of writing compositions centred on literary texts with few personal contributions and little creativity, are as pronounced in this as in previous periods. More than ever, students needed tools for the elucidation of unfamiliar vocabulary in the Homeric text because they had progressively lost sensibility to that dialect. *Scholia minora* served this purpose by providing an elementary commentary, in which traditional elements and teachers' contributions converged. Students of grammarians continued in the range of activities that Dionysius Thrax addressed by defining grammar as a practical expertise (*empeiria*) and as an art (*technê*).[9] Besides copying grammatical manuals (*technai grammatikai*), they also practised morphological exercises of declension and conjugation, which served didactic purposes. The *Chester Beatty Codex* AC 1499, for example, combined extensive grammatical tables and a Greek–Latin glossary of the Pauline epistles.[10] Only in late antiquity, though, did morphological tables become part of scholarly works in the *Canons* of the fourth-century grammarian Theodosius and in the supplement added to Dionysius Thrax's grammatical manual. The date and the authenticity of the latter are still disputed,[11] but undoubtedly the text as it is preserved exerted a sure influence on education only in the fifth century and later, when it became the standard manual. Grammatical texts in the Byzantine period (up to the Middle Ages) increasingly show a feature that appeared sporadically before, namely, the presentation of the material through questions and answers (*erôtapokriseis*). The pedagogical advantage of catechisms is obvious, since they simplified understanding and memorization. It is interesting, however, that while such texts probably originated in the classroom, their use became more general and extended to many fields, such as medicine.[12] They are part of the trend that prevailed from the early Byzantine period on to break up, summarize, and recycle knowledge to make it more accessible.[13]

The range of authors studied in the grammarian's classroom shrank in some respects but expanded in others, reflecting the tastes of the educated public. Surviving literary texts from the early Byzantine period show a range of authors much more limited than in the Hellenistic and Roman periods and concentrated on traditional writers of proven value.[14] Homer

[9] *Grammatici Graeci* I.1, p. 5, 1–5. [10] Wouters 1988. [11] Cf. Cribiore 2001a: 185 and note 2.
[12] See *PSI* I 85-Pack² 2287 for a rhetorical text.
[13] For various manifestations of this trend, see Moreschini 1995.
[14] Cf. the figures for the sixth century in Morgan 2003: 151.

remained the canonical author par excellence in and out of schools and was also present in monastic environments such as the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes. The pedagogical use of the Homeric text well exemplifies the continuing tendency to make a student revisit the same author at different stages of education from elementary to rhetorical, progressively enlarging his knowledge. Euripides continued to be the favourite playwright, at the expense of the more demanding Aeschylus and, in less measure, of Sophocles too. Favourite plays were *Medea* and particularly *Phoenissae*, a preference which does not fully satisfy our modern tastes but pleased the late antique reader with spectacular plots and abundant gnomic material.[15] A sixth-century codex of the latter drama (*P.Würzb.* 1) is an example of a school commentary with notes of a superficial and careless character and a confused presentation of the material.[16] *Phoenissae* became permanently engraved upon the mind of a student and continued to fascinate the general public up to the seventh century.[17] The popularity of this play is a further proof of the powerful ties that continued to exist between *paideia* and ancient culture. The Menander of the *gnômai monostichoi* held sway in both Greek and Coptic contexts. Two papyri from the sixth/seventh century have resurfaced with maxims in Greek and Coptic translation.[18] Menander's comedies, however, were less read both in school and among the general public. In spite of his difficult and often scurrilous vocabulary (and possibly because of it), Aristophanes gained much favour in educational settings. Whereas the popularity of other playwrights peaked in the Roman period, Aristophanes flourished later on. School commentaries with grammatical notes, paraphrases, and glossographical material rendered his comedies more approachable.[19] Guglielmo Cavallo has called attention to a sixth-century codex of the *Wasps*, *P.Oxy.* XI 1374. It likely contained the same seven comedies as the MS Venetus Marcianus 474 from the eleventh century, whose scholia ultimately derive from late antique school contexts.[20] It appears that in the early Byzantine period a school edition of the same seven plays together with a commentary was produced.

But next to classical texts of proven value, Christian texts (St Paul's letters and the Psalms, for example) appeared in the classroom. The Bodmer papyri are exemplary in this respect. Codices containing Christian works

[15] Cribiore 2001b: 241–59. [16] Cf. Maehler 1993: 109–11.
[17] Bremer 1982: 281–8; 1983: 293–305; Bremer and Worp 1986: 240–60.
[18] See Cribiore 1996: nos. 311, 312, and 319. For these texts, see Hagedorn and Weber 1968.
[19] See Zuntz 1975, who argued that the notes in late codices of Aristophanes derive from commentaries used in school. See, e.g., Mertens-Pack³ 142, a parchment codex from the fourth century.
[20] Cavallo 2002: 96–8.

and Menander's comedies probably originated in a Christian school at Panopolis, which also provided elementary training in rhetoric.[21] Educational institutions were not segregated along religious lines.[22] Pagan and Christian students often stood side by side, and Christians pored over classical texts with the same intensity as their pagan counterparts. In the fifth century the philosopher and scholar Hypatia attracted pagans and Christians alike to be her students, Synesius among the latter.[23] A text such as the *Life of Severus* shows that Christian students also attended the classes of the grammarian Horapollon, who came from a family of distinguished teachers and philosophers in Alexandria.[24] Horapollon continued to teach until the end of the fifth century in spite of students' unrest centred on religious beliefs. Alexandria at that time was bustling with prominent teachers such as Asklepiodotos, Heraiskos, Isidoros, Ammonios, and the Christian sophist Aphthonios, who was apparently very popular.

No doubt, if papyri from Alexandria were extant in large number, the scenario of rhetorical education might appear different.[25] But since instruction in rhetoric in other metropoleis may have not been as intense as in the capital, and we have to rely on the few texts produced in Alexandria but transported elsewhere, the evidence is inevitably limited. Rhetoric in Alexandria and in the rest of the country, in any case, had started to decline in the Roman period.[26] As I noted above, the figures for non-Christian literature preserved in Egypt show a reduction in the range and number of books copied after the time of Constantine. And yet during the fourth and at the beginning of the fifth century many authors who no longer appear in the following period were still represented.[27] Of the orators only Demosthenes and Isocrates maintained the same popularity as before. Figures taken from the Mertens-Pack catalogue and the Leuven Database of Ancient Books show twenty-two papyri of Demosthenes versus twenty-seven of Isocrates. It should be taken into account, however, that papyri of Isocrates include the *Cyprian Orations*, which attracted a vast public for their gnomic content and cannot be considered entirely rhetorical works. Aeschines, who was so popular in the Roman period, is represented by only three papyri,[28] and Lysias by perhaps one that was tentatively dated to the third/fourth

[21] On an *êthopoiia* of Christian content, see Fournet 1992; J. van Haelst, *P.Bodmer* XXXVIII, pp. 118–19.
[22] *Pace* Haas 1997: 62. [23] See Dzielska 1995; Cameron 1990.
[24] Cribiore 2001a: 55; Kugener 1903: 22–5.
[25] On the loss of papyri because of the high water table in the Delta, see Smith 1974: 37.
[26] About the decline in Alexandria, see Bowersock 1969: 20–1. Schubert 1995: 178–88 argues against this view but not completely successfully, in my opinion.
[27] Maehler 1997. The figures reported have changed slightly now.
[28] Mertens-Pack 4.04, 13.03, and 17.

century.[29] None of the other orators, like Hyperides, Antiphon, or Isaeus, survived as far as we know.

The popularity of Demosthenes in and out of school was uncontested. He was considered the orator par excellence, and authors of the Second Sophistic and later times were always measured against his standard. In the opinion of Libanius, who was called 'Demosthenes the Second', this orator had the stature of a hero.[30] Besides using Demosthenes heavily in his classes, Libanius exhorted students to continue reading his orations, not only during the summer but also after they left school, to keep up their speaking skills.[31] Education in early Byzantine Egypt also paid some attention to the so-called 'modern authors', such as the second-century sophist Aelius Aristides and Libanius himself, who is represented in three papyri from the fifth to the eighth centuries. These papyri survived probably because they served as models in schools of rhetoric.[32] We know that in fourth-century Antioch Libanius' students studied not only the classics but also his own works and those of his contemporary Themistius.[33] According to Zacharias the Scholastic, Severus, on arriving in Alexandria with his brothers at the end of the fifth century, followed the classes of a *semeiographos*, a teacher of shorthand, a subject that became increasingly popular in late antiquity. In the fourth century, in the reign of Constantius, people who learned this skill could easily obtain high positions in the imperial service even if they did not have an education in rhetoric.[34] After Constantius this policy of privileging shorthand came to an end, but the acquisition of this skill remained a desirable feature of education. After learning shorthand, Severus attended the lectures of a rhetor and immersed himself in the ancient orators, trying to imitate their style. He particularly admired Libanius and considered him on the same level as the best classic orators,[35] but when his Christian friends urged him to read Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus, he immediately fell under their spell. It is intriguing that Severus apparently examined the correspondence of Libanius and Basil, compared their epistolary skills, and declared that Basil's letters were superior. The authenticity of these letters has been strongly disputed, but it appears that, a century after they were written, the corpus (or at least part of it) was considered genuine in Alexandria.[36]

[29] Mertens-Pack 1290. [30] Cf., e.g., *Or.* 55.16; 35.16 and 23. [31] See *Or.* 35.16 and 23.
[32] Papyri of Aristides: Mertens-Pack 136.1, 136.2, and 136.4; Libanius: Pack[2] 1284 and Mertens-Pack 1284, 1284.1, and recently published *LDAB* 10251. Cf. Cavallo 2002: 134–53.
[33] See *Ep.* 894, dated to 388.
[34] Cf. Liebeschuetz 1972: 242–5. See also the repeated complaints of Libanius about this, e.g., *Or.* 18.160.
[35] Kugener 1903: 13.
[36] On Zacharias as a historian, Honigman 1953: 197–8; Bardenhewer 1932: 112–16.

The first exercises a student usually encountered in a rhetor's class were the so-called *progymnasmata*, which were very popular in late antique Egypt. The papyri have transmitted several examples. Paraphrases of ancient texts, considered useful at any level of learning, mostly concerned books of the *Iliad*, the favourite of the epics of Homer, who never lost his grip on a practitioner of rhetoric. Students proceeded with caution on established tracks. They learned to practise different voices and disregard their own, which started to emerge only at the end of the training, in the composition of a full oration. In exercises of impersonation, *êthopoiiai*, a young man learned to develop a distinctive *êthos*, expanding on the reactions of mythological characters to their situations. Besides Achilles, who was the favourite hero of all time, Cain and Abel acquired a voice in Christian milieus.[37] Students also engaged in exercises of praise, *encomia*, which were further practised at the level of declamation.[38]

The fact that, contrary to the examples shown in handbooks of rhetoric, all the preliminary exercises found in late antique Egypt are in verse raises a question about their origin.[39] Are these exercises examples of that encroachment of the teaching of the grammarian upon the proper sphere of the rhetor that Quintilian already lamented?[40] Poetry was the province of the grammarian, while a teacher of rhetoric was supposed to be concerned with prose. Does the form of these exercises indicate that rhetoric proper was not practised extensively, or is it simply the result of the predilection of the Egyptians for poetry? The words of Eunapius with respect to the state of rhetoric in Egypt are ambiguous. Referring to Eusebius, a student of the famous rhetor Prohaeresius, whom Eunapius worshipped, the latter commented: 'As for his talent for rhetoric, it is sufficient to say that he was an Egyptian. These people are really crazy about poetry, whereas Hermes who requires serious study has left them.'[41] Besides the fact that the bold Egyptians did not attract much favour, Eunapius was notoriously biased. Yet his testimony about the popularity of poetry in early Byzantine Egypt finds confirmation in other sources.[42]

A sixth-century codex with a rhetorical manual in the same question-and-answer format that was popular in grammatical handbooks is an indication that rhetoric was still an active part of education, besides being practised in the law courts.[43] Undoubtedly, however, it is very difficult to identify with any certainty more advanced exercises of declamation, of which several examples are extant from the Roman period. It is possible that what was left of an education in rhetoric was almost the exclusive province of

[37] See, e.g., Mertens-Pack 1611 from the sixth century and Fournet 1992.
[38] See, e.g., Mertens-Pack 2528. [39] Cf. Cribiore 2001a: 230. [40] Quintilian 2.1.
[41] Eunapius, *VS* 10.7.12, 493 Giangrande. [42] Cameron 1965. [43] See Mertens-Pack 2288.

Alexandria, but *progymnasmata* caught the fancy of the educated public in the rest of Egypt. In the sixth century, the lawyer and poet Dioskoros of Aphrodite, who probably fulfilled some teaching role, at least with his children, well exemplifies the tastes of cultivated early Byzantine readers. Among the Greek and Coptic papers found in the ruins of his house, there were metrological tables and conjugations, a codex of the *Iliad* with *scholia minora* and annotations (possibly by students), a biography of Isocrates, a Greek–Coptic glossary, and the great papyrus codex of Menander now in Cairo.[44] A large number of poems of praise, written in hexameters of dubious taste, show that people like Dioskoros kept on indulging in the same poetical work they had encountered in school even when school was left behind.

The closeness of the literary productions of students to those of other educated individuals makes it difficult to locate these poetic endeavours with any precision. An interesting case in point is a papyrus from the fourth century found in Hermopolis, which contains two *epicedia* (funeral orations) for professors at Beirut.[45] The one that is better preserved eulogizes a renowned teacher of rhetoric, a star of the lecture room, beloved by his students. The composer, who starts in iambics and proceeds in hexameters, quotes Demosthenes, dutifully praises the teacher's country of origin, Smyrna, where Homer and Aristides were born, and presents the mourning of Constantinople, where the departed was supposed to have been appointed professor. This poem shows that Beirut was not exclusively a Roman town of Latin tongue in the fourth century. It refers to a school of Greek rhetoric and not, as it is sometimes said, to the famous school of Roman law.[46] But who composed these *epicedia*, and how did they end up in Hermopolis? Was it another rhetor who knew the deceased or an ex-student who had followed his lectures in Beirut? It is possible that his poetic *logoi* were delivered in that city but were then brought to Hermopolis.

Papyrus finds from this city testify to an interest in rhetoric that continued in the Byzantine period, but on a scale smaller than before.[47] Even though no copies of Demosthenes are extant from the fourth century on, two papyri suggest that there were learned individuals who kept on reading and referring to the works of the orators. *P. Turner* 9 preserves a list of books

[44] Pack² 1301. The most recent synthesis on Dioskoros is MacCoull 1988; on Dioskoros' literary production, see Fournet 1999 and 2003; on Dioskoros as lawyer, van Minnen 2003.

[45] Pack² 1851; Page 1970, no. 138.

[46] McNamee 1998: 270 n. 5 appears to refer to the law school. Schemmel 1923 rightly pointed to the Hellenization of Beirut in the fourth century.

[47] See van Minnen and Worp 1993: 151–86. See also Müller 1996: 3–8.

that seem to have belonged to the private library of a scholar or advocate, who used works of rhetoric and history.[48] Besides commentaries on Demosthenes and Aeschines, the list mentions lost works of a sophist, Callinicus. A commentary on Demosthenes by the sophist Alexander Claudius and epideictic theoretical works of the well-known rhetor Menander resurface in a letter from the fifth century, which presents friends from a Christian milieu borrowing and using rhetorical writings.[49] The words of Victor urging his correspondent to return his books, 'because God knows how much I need them . . . quickly . . . quickly', echo eternal scholarly concerns.

The *epicedia* of the two teachers at Beirut testify to contacts between Egypt and other educational environments. The geographical mobility of teachers and students is a fascinating aspect of education. Even though this phenomenon was present earlier, it became more pronounced from late antiquity on, when people moved around with remarkable freedom.[50] Grammarians and rhetors looked for higher earnings and more prestigious positions, while students partitioned their education and progressively moved from towns to cities and finally to the great educational magnets, Athens, Constantinople, Antioch, and Alexandria. Libanius, for example, mentions that young men from Egypt attended his school.[51] At least two of these students are known from his letters. Rhetorios, who followed Libanius' classes in Nicomedia, was the son of the Egyptian grammarian Didymos, who had introduced young Libanius to the poets and later taught in Constantinople.[52] The family had a small property in Egypt, and when he went back to that country to receive his paternal inheritance in AD 357, Rhetorios carried letters of recommendation to the governor of Palestine and the *dux Aegypti*.[53] The second student of Egyptian origin, Harpocration, became a teacher of rhetoric in Antioch and moved in later times to Constantinople, where Themistius called him to occupy a position either as a teacher or as a senator.[54] Since Libanius called him 'a poet', he may have composed the type of versified *logoi* which were so popular in Egypt. In the fifth century, there is ample evidence of pagan Alexandrian students travelling to Athens to study philosophy with Plutarch, Syrianus, and Proclus.[55] Because of its

[48] About this text and the following, cf. Otranto 2000, nos. 18 and 19.

[49] *SB* XII 11084.

[50] See Kaster 1988: 126–8 on grammarians' mobility and 21–3 on students' mobility.

[51] *Or.* 31.40.

[52] See Kaster 1988: 270. Another Egyptian grammarian who taught in Libanius' school was Didymos (*Ep.* 155, 231, and 361).

[53] Libanius, *Ep.* 317 and 318.

[54] Libanius, *Ep.* 364, Norman 1992, no. 29; and 368, Cabouret 2000, no. 15. Cf. Kaster 1988: 410–11, no. 226.

[55] See Watts 2004.

distinction, the Neoplatonic school in Athens attracted large groups of intellectuals from Alexandria, but after Proclus' death in 485 some of them returned to Alexandria to teach, thus allowing students to remain in Egypt while studying those doctrines.

But Egypt was not only an exporter of students. Some students left their home country to continue their education in Alexandria. The fields that exercised particular attraction were philosophy and medicine. Menecrates abandoned his studies of rhetoric with Libanius to follow the classes of Diophantos, an otherwise unknown philosopher.[56] Like Ammianus, Libanius recognized the outstanding position of Alexandria as a centre of Neoplatonic philosophy, where 'teachers of the arts uplift and bless mankind'.[57] Another student, Chrysogonos, went to Egypt because 'he intended to learn the art of medicine in a short time' with the famous Magnus, who was one of those medical sophists, *logiatroi*, mentioned by Eunapius.[58] Since he had some rhetorical skills already, the hopes of Chrysogonos might not have been unreasonable. Magnus, however, though a relative of his, pretended not to know him, and Chrysogonos became distraught and fell ill. While the Alexandrian experience was not successful for this young man, other students thrived there. Hilarion, the founder of the anchoritic life in Palestine, pursued his entire education in Alexandria in the fourth century. St Jerome relates that he moved there from a small village south of Gaza. In this case, Greek education unusually bridged the divide between a country village and a metropolis.[59] In the same period the younger brother of Gregory of Nazianzus left Cappadocia to study medicine in Alexandria, and Gregory himself says that he studied rhetoric in this city before completing his education in Athens.[60]

In the fifth century, the friends of Severus who chose to get a higher education in Alexandria came from Phoenicia, Palestine, Asia Minor, and the Greek islands. When Severus' mother was widowed in Pisidia, she did not hesitate to send her three sons to Egypt to study 'grammar and rhetoric, both Greek and Latin'.[61] There is evidence of a group of intellectuals from Gaza studying philosophy in Alexandria in the late fifth–early sixth century.[62] Contacts between Alexandria and Gaza were close. Aeneas of Gaza in the late fifth century set his dialogue *Theophrastus* in Alexandria

[56] Libanius, *Ep.* 720 and 721. [57] Ammianus 22.16.17–22; Libanius, *Or.* 42.16. Blumenthal 1993.
[58] Libanius, *Ep.* 1208. Eunapius, *VS* 20.497–8. Cf. Penella 1990: 115–17. Penella does not record this letter of Libanius.
[59] St Jerome, *Vita Hilarion.* 2. Cf. Kaster 1988: 21.
[60] On Caesarius, see Van Dam 2003: 60–5 and n. 3; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm.* 2.1.11.128–9. Van Dam wrongly maintains that Gregory was in Alexandria only to visit his brother.
[61] Kugener 1903: 11. [62] See Watts 2004: 16 n. 12.

with Alexandrian characters who had studied philosophy there, and who argued ideas discussed in Alexandrian schools at that time.[63] In the following century, moreover, Procopius of Gaza proudly received a crown for rhetoric in Alexandria (*Ep.* 48, 96). Likewise, in the sixth century, the poet and historian Agathias, a native of Myrina in Asia Minor, moved to Alexandria. The nature of his studies in Egypt has been debated. Since Agathias mentions 'training preliminary to a study of law' as the reason for his stay, he must have followed not only Greek rhetoric[64] but also some Latin classes designed to give him a smattering of that language.[65]

A cultural phenomenon which in late antiquity contributed to both the decline of Greek rhetoric and the advance of Latin in the eastern part of the empire was a change in the training of advocates. The literary advocate, the product of the Greek *logoi*, started to lose ground before the technical advocate who learned Roman law. In past times, an advocate trained in Greek rhetoric relied on the knowledge of *iurisconsulti* in court, but from the late fourth century on he had to master both fields. While the technique of argument he had learned was still very useful, speeches became shorter, with less emphasis on style, and students increasingly felt it necessary to learn Roman law. The most prominent law school in the East until 551 (when it was destroyed by an earthquake) was located in Beirut.[66] At that time the law school in Constantinople became pre-eminent, but schools of lesser importance were at Caesarea in Palestine and Alexandria. It is very difficult to reconstruct the story of the law school of Alexandria, because the only evidence dates to 533, when the school was eliminated. According to Justinian's *Digest* (*Const. Omnem* 7),[67] the schools of Alexandria and Caesarea were closed because their teachers were 'unskilled men who went around and handed down an illegitimate doctrine to their students'. It is difficult to say whether political reasons motivated the decision or the fundamental issue was that these schools did not have a permanent faculty which transmitted a traditional doctrine.[68] Itinerant teachers, in any case, were a feature of ancient education. Information about the curriculum in a school of law exists only for Beirut.[69] Students learned from oral

[63] Colonna 1958.
[64] Cameron 1970: 140–1 accepts the reading πρὸ (instead of πρός, II 15 Bonn, p. 95.1 Keydell) that appears only in one manuscript. This emendation is secure. She assumes that Agathias studied rhetoric in Alexandria. Scheltema 1970: 6 also opts for rhetoric but defines it as 'un cours de Latin'. A combination of these views is more likely.
[65] Scheltema 1970: 12 is inclined to think that Agathias had only one year of Latin.
[66] Collinet 1925: 16–20. Wenger 1953 mostly upholds Collinet's views. The school was destroyed by fire in 551.
[67] Mommsen and Krueger 1985. [68] Amelotti 1995: 34 opts for the first reason.
[69] Schulz 1946: 275–6.

discussions of cases, public and individual *disputationes*, and readings from legal works,[70] but as the knowledge of Latin became increasingly insufficient, a pedagogical innovation was introduced at least in the fifth century. Teachers produced summary translations of legal texts into Greek, which were called *indices*.[71]

In Roman Egypt, Greek always remained the chief language, but the learning of Latin became more widespread in the fourth century. It is suggestive that Latin was learned for example in fourth-century Kellis, where a certain Manichean teacher was supposed to teach Latin (*mntrōmaios* in Coptic) to a young man.[72] It was argued recently that there was no official policy at the time of Diocletian to raise the status of Latin, and this is probably true. Yet one cannot underestimate the fact that most of the Latin and bilingual papyri preserved (documents along with literary and semi-literary texts) date from the period after Diocletian.[73] It is commonly maintained that in that period someone aspiring to enter the public administration needed to learn Latin and went through a school called σχολὴ τῶν Ῥωμαικῶν.[74] The only text that shows the various stages in Latin literacy (and perhaps also refers to the school of Alexandria) is *Homily* 15 of Makarios, who lived in Egypt in the fourth century. The beginning of this passage is as follows:

> When someone wants to get an education, he goes and learns the letters. When he becomes the first there, he goes to the σχολὴ τῶν Ῥωμαικῶν and is the last of the students. But when he becomes the first, he goes to the σχολὴ τῶν γραμματικῶν and he is the last there, an ἀρχάριος. Then when he becomes a σχολαστικός, he is the last of the advocates, an ἀρχάριος.

This text, with its emphasis on promotion according to ability, is rather confusing. While it shows that in Egypt γράμματα μανθάνειν started from Greek and then continued with Latin, it does not clarify what exactly the σχολὴ τῶν Ῥωμαικῶν was, when a student entered it, and for how many years he would attend. In an apparent confusion with the second stage of Greek education (that at the hands of the grammarian) Makarios calls the law school σχολὴ τῶν γραμματικῶν.[75] Makarios mentions

[70] Collinet 1925: 220. Scheltema 1970: 9 thinks that these teaching aids existed before the fifth century.
[71] Scheltema 1970: 12–16; McNamee 1998: 273–4. This is another aspect of the phenomenon mentioned above of furnishing people with more easily digestible knowledge.
[72] See *P.Kell.* V 20.24–6.
[73] Adams 2003: 635–7 argued against an official policy; contra, e.g., Rochette 1997: 118–19.
[74] Rochette 1997: 163; cf. also Rochette 1990: 335–6. Makarios, *Homiliae spirituales* 15.585–8 (ed. H. Dörries, E. Klostermann, M. Kroeger). An almost identical version is preserved in *Sermones* 45.4.2–8 (ed. H. Berthold).
[75] The version of *Sermones* 45, in fact, depicts the student as going to the grammarian.

neither the curriculum nor whether Latin or Greek was the language of instruction in the law school, but it should be taken into account that someone wishing to enter the administration knew he could rely on scribes for both documents and letters, so that his knowledge of Latin did not need to be profound, and actually a mere veneer was sufficient.[76] Evidence from Syria and Constantinople, moreover, shows that the Latin skills of official and intellectual figures were very erratic. From Libanius, his relatives, and friends one derives the impression that either they did not know Latin at all or they possessed only a veneer of it.[77] Highly cultivated people like Gregory of Nazianzus declared their ignorance of 'the Latin language and things of Italy',[78] and the lack of Latin in someone like the philosopher Themistius is striking, because he resided in Constantinople, had a close relationship with several emperors, and became urban prefect of this city.[79]

The texts found in Egypt addressing the acquisition of Latin (the so-called 'school exercises') are bilingual glossaries and texts of authors that mostly date from the fourth century on.[80] The fact that seven of the glossaries assembled by Kramer are dated after the fourth century (in the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries) is a significant testimony that the need to learn some Latin continued. Bilingual glossaries present Latin words and their Greek equivalents side by side and were popular for language learning in Egypt. Contrary to the *communis opinio* that Greek glossaries became bilingual in the West, Johannes Kramer has shown conclusively that all the fragments of glossaries from the Roman and early Byzantine periods were part of a large bilingual work, which anticipated the medieval *Hermeneumata*.[81] The majority of the glossaries show a peculiar feature: they are written throughout in Greek, with the Latin words transliterated. Scholars have tried somewhat unsuccessfully to explain this characteristic by considering them exercises in dictation or teacher's models.[82] The Greeks and the Romans felt differently with regard to learning a second language, and their attitudes partly explain transliteration in the glossaries. It is undeniable that the Romans had a deferential outlook towards the Greek language and literature. Cultivated Romans were exposed to both languages from the early

[76] On extensive use of scribes, Adams 2003: 542.
[77] Cf. Liebeschuetz 1972: 247–8.
[78] But Gregory may have had a limited knowledge of Latin.
[79] See Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 173, and Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 14 to Libanius.
[80] This corpus of texts includes only one alphabet.
[81] For the glossaries transmitted by medieval manuscripts, see Goetz and Gundermann 1888; Goetz 1892. Cf. Dionisotti 1982. See Kramer 1983 and 2001.
[82] See Priest 1977; Wouters 1976: 179–91. On the state of the question, Kramer 1983: 10–11; Brashear 1981.

years. While the situation had evolved from the early empire, when all elite children started with Greek in school,[83] a well-educated Roman still knew Greek in the early Byzantine period. A letter of Libanius to Symmachus, for example, shows that Symmachus' father Avianius knew Greek to perfection, and the reason why Symmachus corresponded in Latin with the Greek sophist was respect for his superior skills rather than lack of Greek.[84] The Greeks, however, considered their language superior to others and felt linguistically self-sufficient. The traditional idea of the Greeks' contempt for Romans and their language has limited validity, and yet it should be recognized that, by and large, the Greeks were not interested in Roman culture and literature.[85] As I will show below, a veneer of Latin satisfied most of the needs of the Greeks of Egypt.

Bilingual word lists for the *Aeneid*, in which either the whole text or isolated words were rendered in Greek, also testify to the need to learn Latin that some people felt in Egypt.[86] By and large, these vocabularies do not show a sophisticated understanding of the Vergilian text and are often as literal and nonsensical as computerized translations.[87] Because of this, scholars have sometimes attributed their compilation to individual learners,[88] but these lists are specific standard editions intended for circulation in a large number of copies.[89] Of course one may wonder why an official or a student of Roman law had any interest in learning Vergil. Instruction in Latin, however, followed in the footsteps of Greek education and proceeded from alphabets to lists of words, from vocabularies to Vergil, and on to whole literary texts. Vergil occupied in the Latin pantheon the same dominant position as Homer in the Greek one. A complete picture of Latin learning in Egypt must also include consideration of a few bilingual books in codex form that contain texts of Cicero, Juvenal, Sallust, and Terence.[90] The palaeographical scenario for all these papyri reveals that by and large

[83] Quintilian 1.1.12–14 attests that in first-century Rome most elite children studied Greek first ('because Latin learning is derived from Greek') and continued with that to the point of developing a Greek accent when speaking Latin.

[84] *Ep.* 1004. See Bruggisser 1990.

[85] Rochette 1997: 69–83 and 260. In contrast, the Romans felt linguistically humble versus Greek, cf. Fögen 2000.

[86] *LDAB* 4146; 4149; 4154; 4155; 4156; 4160; 4161; and 4162. A similar text is *LDAB* 4159, a vocabulary of the *Georgics*. Cf. Rochette 1997: 188–98.

[87] Rochette 1990: 333–46.

[88] Gaebel 1970: 302.

[89] See J. Axer in the introduction to *P.Rain.Cent.* 163.

[90] Cicero is represented in four papyri, *LDAB* 554, 556, 559 (passages from orations *in Catilinam*), and 558 (*Divinatio in Q. Caecilium*). See also *LDAB* 2559 (Juvenal), 3875 and 3877 (Sallust), 3982 and 3983 (Terence).

they are not the products of amateurish activities.[91] It is almost impossible to identify examples of hands that could be characterized as 'personal'. Many of the *codices* containing word lists of Vergil and other authors are inscribed in very formal book hands, are very extensive, and were *éditions de luxe*.[92] When they are written in proficient but less formal cursives,[93] they still functioned as textbooks for people who wanted to acquire a smattering of literature. In the fourth century in particular, but also later on, there was need in Egypt of cheap bilingual books written less carefully for those who wished to learn some Latin, and the market provided them. If one now considers literary texts written entirely in Latin, it is equally doubtful whether any of the papyri that might have addressed the learning of a second language preserves exercises. An important caveat is that it is very difficult to identify with certainty the readership of books of authors written entirely in Latin, since they might have been used by Roman citizens, and they rarely bear traces that they were handled exclusively by Greeks. But if one considers, for examples, the dates of books of Vergil found in Egypt, which with a single exception all belong to the fourth or fifth century,[94] it seems likely that many of them served the renewed interest in learning Latin in the period after Diocletian.

I would like to consider more closely two texts, both from the fifth century, that attest that Latin continued to interest learners in the period after Diocletian. *PSI* I 21 is a well-written codex of the *Aeneid*, which contains some accents and marks of long quantity.[95] It seems likely that the book was not intended for a proficient reader of Vergil (or even someone who knew how to pronounce Latin), but instead someone at a lower level, who was more interested in practising Latin pronunciation than in appreciating the poetical text. *PSI* II 142, written in a good cursive script, consists of a paraphrase of *Aeneid* 1.477–93, which is usually identified as an exercise

[91] Bataille 1967: 164, made a similar observation on a smaller sample of glossaries. See, however, Kramer 2001, nos. 5 and 7, in hands not completely regular (the latter from the second century). The irregularly written Kramer 1983, no. 14 does not address Latin learning.

[92] See, e.g., three parchment books, *LDAB* 4156 (140 leaves from a parchment codex), 4160 (inscribed by an expert scribe), and 4162 (written in a formal uncial hand).

[93] See *LDAB* 4149. A possible exception to this scenario might be *LDAB* 4149 (*P.XV Congr.* 3), since H. Maehler, the editor, has shown in his commentary that the text was written and translated at the same time.

[94] *LDAB* 4138 (first century AD). All late: *LDAB* 4147; 4150; 4151; 4152; 4153; 4157; and 4158. Texts of other authors mostly belong to late antiquity too, see *LDAB* 3876, 3879, 3880, 3881 with Sallust (only 3882 and 3878 are Roman); Livy 2575 and 2576 are early Byzantine (2574 is Roman); except for *LDAB* 561, all the papyri of Cicero are late (552, 553, 554, 555, 557, and 560).

[95] Moore 1924.

from a rhetorical school.[96] The Vergilian text, however, is not rendered in prose; rather, the writer was able to produce a somewhat skilful version in hexameters. We have seen that poetry, which was the focus of the instruction at the school of the grammarian, was still of interest in schools of rhetoric, and in Egypt students wrote Greek *progymnasmata* in verse. In this case, the exercise seems unusually advanced and betrays the effort of a poet or aspiring poet with notable language skills who was trying his hand at Vergil. It is well known, however, that in the middle of the fifth century Latin ceased to be the language in regular use at the court of Constantinople. Even though the court of Theodosius II was fundamentally Greek, and the Hellenization of the Eastern empire was a fact, Latin did not disappear; it remained as a language of culture and was still learned and studied.[97]

Let us now go back to those texts we have considered above that testify to the learning of Latin in fourth century Egypt and later. Even though they are usually called 'school exercises', an examination of their scripts shows that they hardly represent the efforts of students. But where are the written exercises of the students who were learning Latin? Where are the texts they copied or the compositions and paraphrases they worked on? Arguing that they are lost or that students discarded them in Alexandria is not a satisfactory solution. It is possible that Latin teachers were not only located in Alexandria but also travelled around the country and brought their expertise at least to metropoleis such as Oxyrhynchos and Hermopolis, where Latin texts are particularly numerous. But even assuming that most students of Latin received instruction in the capital, it would be unusual for them to have discarded everything they had written, since students usually clung to their Greek exercises. I suggest, therefore, that students did a very limited amount of written work because they aimed at acquiring only reading literacy.[98] If we consider once again the reasons why people needed to learn Latin, that is, to enter the administration and to learn Roman law, we see that insisting on writing skills was superfluous. A veneer of Latin that allowed them to function in a class by reading the texts of law was all that was necessary.[99] In comparison to the Greek school exercises, the so-called 'Latin school exercises' are quite limited in terms of quantity, range, and

[96] See Cavallo et al., 1998: 166–7 no. 86. [97] Dagron 1969.

[98] Cf. R. Cribiore, 'Latin Literacy in Egypt', in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Ancient Mediterranean World, KODAI* forthcoming. The Latin and Greek scripts were related but not identical, see Adams 2003: 41.

[99] Some Egyptian students went to the law school in Beirut. It is usually assumed that studies were conducted in Latin there, but this fact is unproven, and the use by Libanius of the term φωνή (*phônê*) in *Or.* II 44 (the evidence invoked to support that) is very ambiguous.

variety, but they nonetheless totally addressed the needs of people wishing to acquire some capability to read Latin in early Byzantine Egypt.

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CHAPTER 4

Philosophy in its social context

Leslie S. B. MacCoull

No more vivid illustration of the activity of philosophy in the world of late antique Egypt and of the physical and social spaces within which philosophers – and their colleagues and competitors for students, the rhetoricians[1] – operated could be given than the recent archaeological discovery of a number of educational lecture rooms at the Kom el-Dikka site in Alexandria, recently the subject of conferences in Alexandria and London.[2] Within such spaces philosophy was taught by masters of varying ideological stance, and learned by pupils from all over the Mediterranean. As a survey of global scope puts it, 'the history of philosophy is . . . the history of groups',[3] and Egypt's Alexandrians were a group that self-consciously and carefully transmitted master-to-pupil chains of learning.[4] They functioned as an interpretive community, one with many voices, both non-Christian and Christian of differing varieties. Their audiences were the elite class of the late Roman empire,[5] topping off their local *paideia* with the finishing curriculum that groomed them for high positions in state and church.[6] The choice of subjects discussed grew out of the changing circumstances of late antique society,[7] with a transforming support economy, the rise of new culture-carrying agents, and shifting boundaries of confession and empire.[8]

The conventional picture has been one of a world of its own[9] in which the pagan Proclus of Athens (d. 485) taught the pagan Ammonios of Alexandria

[1] See Jeffreys 2003 (mostly for the later period, however). A session on 'Rhetoric in Byzantine Culture' was held at the 2005 International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo.
[2] Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: 62–5; cf. the prediction in Alston 2002: 164.
[3] Collins 1998: 3; cf. 28–37 on group dynamics.
[4] Emmel 2002: 125–36. [5] Cf. Marrone 2003: 10–16; Watts 2006.
[6] Wildberg 2005. Though Smith 2004 does place Plotinus in 'a transition period . . . [of] rapidity of social and economic change' (x), he effectively ends with Boethius in the West (126–9) and the Pseudo-Dionysius in the East (125–6), and the work is arranged, to begin with, more by topic than historically.
[7] Cf. Ierodiakonou 2002: 2, 4. [8] Cf. Sheppard 2000.
[9] E.g. Blumenthal 1993; Westerink 1990a: x–xlii; Westerink 1990b.

(d.*c.* 526), who in turn taught the miaphysite Christian John Philoponus (d.*c.* 575) and the pagans Simplicius (*fl.* 530s) and Olympiodorus (d.*c.* 566); Olympiodorus then supposedly taught (at one remove?) the later Christians Elias (*fl.c.* 550?), David (*fl.c.* 575?), and Stephanus (*fl.c.* 600). This master-narrative picture has been challenged in many ways.[10] More than one kind of authority was in place. Philosophy was not just a curriculum but an enacted way of life, and an ethic of social advancement was not being carried on in a vacuum isolated from the Egyptian economy within the empire and from the changes of power effected by emperors and bishops.[11] Emperors never stopped trying to bring about the renewed unity that Chalcedon's conciliar decisions had broken in 451;[12] and the Egyptian majority church was, since Athanasius and especially Cyril, deeply centralized on the person of the bishop of Alexandria who appointed all provincial bishops[13] himself, with no intervening layer of administration. One could not be unaware of who sat in that chair and what views he held, while on him depended one's weekly and festal ritual experience of life in community according to what clergy he put in place. Ritual was importantly discussed by both post-Iamblichean Neoplatonists and village believers.[14] Students thus experienced the philosophy curriculum in their own lives. What we must do is ask social questions about these producers and consumers of intellectual and cultural work, combining different kinds of sources,[15] to try to understand how they engaged with both the past and their present.

TEACHERS, STUDENTS, SUBJECTS

To begin with, Ammonios son of Hermeias: by the time he was teaching, under Leo I and alternating pro- and anti-Chalcedonian bishops of Alexandria, the foundations for Egypt's *autopragia*-enriched estate economy were being laid,[16] an economy that would confer wealth upon a new aristocracy

[10] On the problematic later figures, who may not have existed under the attributed names we have known them by, see C. Wildberg, 'Elias' and 'David', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring/Fall 2003 Edition)*, ed. E. N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2003/entries/elias/ and . . . fall2003/entries/david/.

[11] For an overview of the earlier period, see Haas 1997: 316–30, cf. 152–5, 187–8.

[12] Gray 2005. [13] Worp 1994.

[14] Cf. Clarke 2001: 43–4 and 2004: 276; also Sheppard 2000: 848–9.

[15] Cf. Celenza 2004: xiii–xviii, 48–51, 59–69 – a useful comparandum from the West.

[16] Banaji 2001: 130, for a recent (though controversial) view; and cf. *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67019.3–6, 67028.11–13. Leo's creation of the office of *pater civitatis* (cf. *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4393) *c.* 465 tied the provincial cities closer to the central administration and provided for the outlet of local euergetism through building works: cf. Alston 2002: 309–11.

of service,[17] whose children would frequent his classes. A picture of these classes in their varied social and religious make-up is given in Zacharias Scholasticus' *Ammonios*.[18] He covered the usual logic texts, and his curriculum treatment[19] culminated (through a pupil) in the *Metaphysics* commentary. Earlier scholars (with a romantic view of 'good' paganism against 'bad, repressive' Christianity) used to speak scornfully of Ammonios' having come to an 'accommodation with Christianity', possibly for money: in this they took the pagan Damascius[20] too literally. The context is probably rather the fact that Ammonios was teaching at the time of Zeno's *Henotikon* (482) under the anti-Chalcedonian Peter Mongus, and the same emperor's crackdown on some philosophers' support for rebel generals in Alexandria in 488/89.[21] A philosophy teacher who wanted students could not be seen as a potential traitor. And also the great abbot Shenoute lived on until Leo's reign, influencing anti-Chalcedonian thought in his own region through his sermons (though they would not have reached an audience that knew only Greek), and placing Coptic closer to the foreground as a language of literature and culture in Egypt.[22] Chronologically, the same individual could have heard both Shenoute and Ammonios speak (in their two different languages and in their widely separated places) – though perhaps it was too wide a cultural stretch for us to suppose that any one person actually did so.

Logic was all very well for the students, but things began to shift when the young John Philoponus, more of a literature specialist (*grammaticus*), began to publish his elderly master's lecture notes during the reign of Anastasius and under an unbroken succession of anti-Chalcedonian bishops (John I and II). Now we see the traditional choice of philosophy texts truly being influenced and modified by concerns of the time.[23] The pro-miaphysite Anastasius' restructuring of imperial fiscality, currency reform, and abolition of the *chrysargyron* tax on urban businesses seem to have enabled the accumulation of greater provincial wealth and the growth of the local

[17] Cf. Hickey 2001: 12–21 in his recent study of the Apions. Several members of this powerful Oxyrhynchite family served in the capital: most notably Apion I in Anastasius' Persian campaigns (exiled for dyophysitism, he was recalled by Justin I); Strategius II as *comes sacrarum largitionum* and convener of a bishops' theological debate; and Apion II as consul in 539.

[18] Ed. M. Colonna (Naples 1973).

[19] For the usual curriculum order of Aristotle and Plato texts, see Siorvanes 1996: 116.

[20] See Athanassiadi 1999. [21] Wildberg 2005.

[22] Emmel 2004: I.6–13. Shenoute made a practice in effect of attacking classical philosophy with the weapons of a classical rhetor.

[23] Not by some imagined local peculiarity of exegetical method bringing about a local type of dogmatic stance, as used to be thought: besides Wildberg 2003, see Chase 2003: 5: 'doctrines expressed in the Neoplatonist commentaries are not comprehensible when taken out of context'.

service aristocracy in Egypt,[24] who provided the consumer audience for higher education. (When local elites became richer, they wanted the top-most layer of conspicuous-consumption education for their children.) In addition, resistance to Chalcedon was strong, and with a friendly emperor and miaphysite bishops in charge of both Alexandria and Antioch (Severus, from 512), the anti-Chalcedonians seemed to be having things their way.[25] Philoponus began,[26] at the end of the traditional Aristotle order, with a commentary on the *De anima*, in which his famous remark on how tyrants' power cannot compel the soul to assent to *dogma asebes*, 'impious doctrine' (*CAG* 15: 104.21–3), refers not to Christian repression of paganism but to how miaphysites could not be stopped even by previous emperors' attempts to enforce Chalcedon. Then he returned to the expected logic texts, *Coming to Be, Categories*, and *Analytics*, choosing to comment on texts dealing with the nature of matter and on how to think while Egypt was abuzz with the intra-miaphysite Julianist controversy over what Christ's material body was and how to debate internal and external opponents.[27]

JOHN PHILOPONUS IN HIS WORLD

Philoponus was, in a Neoplatonic Egypt familiar with both alchemy and theurgy, aware that there was a way to make the deity present and make the worshipper united with the deity: it was the eucharist. A eucharistic subtext runs steadily between the lines of his work, the eucharist being, as it was, a strong point of separation from Chalcedon.[28] Seeing what was beginning to be the birth of a new Egyptian church, a church he was providing with a powerful intellectual tool kit, he was doing what a modern scholar has described as seeing the eucharist event as 'the condition of possibility for all human meaning'.[29] In his *Physics* commentary of 517, a year before the accession of the Chalcedon-enforcing, *Henotikon*-revoking Justin I,[30] he enlarged the scope of his work on place, space, and force to lay out his

[24] Cf., e.g., Banaji 2002: 57–8, 88, 123, 158; and Sarris 2004: 290–8. More work is needed on the actual causes of the late fifth- and sixth-century increase in local elite wealth and how such local families kept it in their hands.

[25] Van Rompay 2005; Johnson 1986; Davis 2004: 93–101.

[26] See MacCoull 1995 and 2006a. For a list of works, see Scholten 1997: 1, 29, 36–43 and Wildberg 2003.

[27] MacCoull 1995: 50–2. In *In Cat.* (*CAG* 13.1) 126.29–31 Philoponus alludes to Psalm 36:35–6 (and Ecclesiastes 7:15); and in *In Cat.* 169.19 to the gospel story of the healing of the blind – familiar in late antique art – from John 9 and Mark 8:22–5, 10:46–52 (cf. Matthew 11:5, 15:31/Luke 7:22).

[28] MacCoull 2003a. [29] Pickstock 1998: xv; cf. 157–63.

[30] A year also of transition in the non-Chalcedonian succession at Alexandria, from the defiantly named Dioskoros II to the equally militant Timothy IV. In 518 Justin I exiled Severus to Egypt, where he rallied the miaphysites and strove for intra-confessional unity. For insight into the local Egyptian economy under Justin I, see Zuckerman 2004.

celebrated impetus theory[31] in a context of asking in just what kind of moving-matter universe the incarnation and the eucharist could happen. Next he would ask how that universe came about in the first place.

The two redactions of the *Physics* commentary on the universe (and the lost one on Plato's *Phaedo* (Scholten 1997, I.38, no. 11), engaging in this early period with the immortality of the soul just as debates over Origenism began to heat up) combined with the effects of Justin I's policies to raise the curtain on Philoponus' three-act drama of the break with Aristotle. The first two acts of this drama were his *Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World*[32] (from the fateful year of 529)[33] and *Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World* (from *c.* 530–4).[34] The third act would come after the 'dark sky' of 535,[35] when Theodosius was elected miaphysite bishop of Alexandria (not without challenge) and then exiled to detention at Constantinople the following year; and after the death of Severus in Egypt in 538 and the great plague of the 540s.[36] This was Philoponus' Genesis commentary, *De opificio mundi* (*c.* 546–52),[37] dedicated to Sergius of Tella (a miaphysite ordained in 544). This work is not only a reconciliation of biblical creation *ex nihilo* with the Aristotelian elements and the Platonic demiurge:[38] it is also a manifesto of miaphysite Christology and a refutation of the dyophysite creation picture put forward by the Alexandrian merchant Cosmas 'Indicopleustes'. Only a correct understanding of who the Creating Logos was, that Logos whose creative power was still active in the present, would enable the student correctly to grasp the nature of the created cosmos.[39] By this time the separating Egyptian church was beginning to install its own clergy, build its own spaces, practise its own biblical exegesis, and enact its own eucharist. The classically[40] and biblically informed audience for this work would have

[31] See Wildberg 2003.

[32] Trans. M. Share, 2 vols. (Ithaca 2004). In Smith 2004: 141 n. 4, *Against Proclus* is an error for *Against Aristotle*. On the *C. Procl.* see 107–8.

[33] The cessation of philosophy teaching by non-Christians, especially at Athens, is most clearly elucidated by Wildberg 2005.

[34] Perhaps connected with Justinian's conferences of 532 (?) (cf. Gray 2005). In frag. 134 (trans. C. Wildberg (Ithaca 1987) 148) he quotes Isaiah and Revelation.

[35] See Farquharson 1996; Arjava 2005.

[36] See Horden 2005 and Sarris 2002. Between 537 and 550, on both sides of this social trauma, there were at least three attempts to impose a pro-Chalcedonian bishop on Alexandria, but loyalty remained largely directed to the absent Theodosius, though he had challengers from within the miaphysite school of thought.

[37] In addition to Scholten 1997 and Rosset and Congourdeau 2004, an annotated English translation was prepared by the present writer in 1995.

[38] Scholten 1996. [39] MacCoull 2006a.

[40] Philoponus apparently got his quotation of an ancient philosophical aphorism in *Opif.* 1.22 from Gregory of Nyssa's *Macrinia*, which also existed in a sixth-century Coptic translation (Coquin and Lucchesi 1981).

been the same educated elite[41] who followed the proceedings of Justinian's Constantinopolitan council of 553, for which Philoponus composed his defence of miaphysite Christology entitled *Arbiter*[42] and bravely engaged directly (by letter) with the emperor.[43]

OTHER VOICES

Meanwhile, in those same Alexandrian lecture halls, the pagan Olympiodorus taught on logic, physical science (the *Meteorologica*, also commented on by Philoponus), and the beginning texts of the Plato curriculum.[44] The *First Alcibiades* (then believed genuine), on knowing oneself and dealing with statesmanship, war, and peace (important in the age of Justinian!), had been commented on by Proclus, whose commentary Philoponus quotes verbatim in the *Opificio*. The *Gorgias*, asking whether rhetoric could lead one to the good, was also educationally of central importance[45] in an age when flattering Justinian could be a life-or-death concern.[46] And the *Phaedo*, on the immortality of the soul, was, as we have already seen, a natural curriculum subject for consumers of late antique culture in Egypt whatever their beliefs. Students already prepared by the rhetorical training were given this extra matter to chew on at the same time as they either saw others assisting at Christian liturgies – of whatever variety – or attended them themselves.

Olympiodorus was more low-profile than the Athenian-educated pagan Simplicius, who attacked Philoponus, whom he indeed thought a 'simpleton', at every turn from his post-529 locations outside the empire. From the vantage point of Persia, the other superpower in Justinian's on-again-off-again eastern wars, Simplicius wrote polemics against Philoponus in his Aristotle commentaries, which have been thoroughly studied, while his Stoic treatise remains less so. In his *Commentary on Epictetus' Handbook*,[47] probably from the 530s, his engagement with dualistic (and cosmologically objectionable) Manichaeism[48] had one eye on Egypt, as we now know from

[41] From the world of the papyri, cf. Fournet 2003a and 2003b.
[42] Lang 2001. [43] MacCoull 2003b.
[44] We can no longer postulate either a Plato avoided by Christians because of 'dangerous' doctrines like *anamnêsis*/pre-existence or a Plato avoided by pagans trying to compromise with a Christian ruling power (who in that view preferred Plato as closer to Christian creationism).
[45] Cf. Browning 2000; and the future paper by R. Cribiore at the London conference on the Alexandrian teaching space.
[46] See the controversial work of Kaldellis 2004: 94–164.
[47] Trans. C. Brittain and T. Brennan, 2 vols. (London and Ithaca 2002).
[48] E.g., the moon as ship of souls (§27); *Commentary*, trans. Brittain and Brennan, I: 3, II: 37–51, esp. here 39. The Kellis material in its Egyptian context is now comprehensively covered in Gardner and Lieu 2004.

the early evidence of the Kellis papyri that Manichaeism had deep roots both in the oases and wherever in the Nile Valley teachers found audiences. Simplicius of course covers theurgy and the powers of holy objects (a counter to Christian eucharists and relics: §31 (II: 66)), and defends the social value of philosophy (§24). Composed by an outspokenly combative pagan, the final prayer (II: 127) has, as the translators notice, a paradoxically Christian ring. But Simplicius carried on with the tried-and-true curriculum: logic, natural science, and especially the *De Caelo* as a stick with which to beat Philoponus and his created universe.[49] From his point of view, regarding the universe as having had a beginning, as Christians did, was simply disrespectful. Philoponus countered with his exposition in the *Opificio* that the four Aristotelian elements were present at the creation – air/*pneuma* hovering over the water, then earth lit by fire (1.6). Moses, in this view, was an accurate *physiologos*.

Also from the latter part of Justinian's reign we have, preserved in a palimpsest, an anonymous Platonic-style *Dialogue on Political Science*.[50] Its two speakers are called 'Thaumasios' (the learner, probably from the ironic term of address in Plato's dialogues, *thaumasie*, 'my good man') and 'Menodoros' (the instructor), in earlier times a pagan–theophoric name from the god Men but by Byzantine times a name rooted in the Egyptian cult of the wonder-working St Menas with his shrine near Alexandria.[51] This may point to an origin for the dialogue in Alexandrian Neoplatonism: Christian Neoplatonism, it would seem from the numerous allusions to biblical texts (not noticed by recent critics). The ideal emperor is to imitate God and 'walk in the light' in order to lead his subjects to the 'city which is above'; one speaker even gives an otherwise unattested iambic-verse paraphrase[52] of Psalm 129:1. The author uses archaic administrative terms attested in documentary papyri from an earlier era, like *agoranomos*, to stand for titles in his picture of the ideal state. The Platonic *politeia* described by the dialogue's author would have been a different kind of mirror held up to Justinian by a thinker concerned over what might happen under

[49] An example: both Simplicius and Philoponus preserve the Anaximander fragment, but for very different reasons; MacCoull 1998a.
[50] Ed. C. Mazzucchi (Milan 1982). See most recently O'Meara 2004 and 2003: 171–84 and now MacCoull 2006b.
[51] Papaconstantinou 2001: 146–54 with abundant documentation. Justinian himself apparently successfully had the Menas shrine (with its power) taken over by the Chalcedonians, but there was a continuing non-Chalcedonian presence on site, contesting that very power (Bagnall and Rathbone 2004: 118).
[52] Compare the iambic in *P.Flor.* III 295.6 and *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 12.25, recalling classical sources: this kind of paraphrasing is typical of late antique *paideia*.

the childless emperor's possible successors (sections 158–68). Egypt being central to imperial pro-unity policy in its role as food producer, this philosophical text – notably a dialogue, not a tractate like Agapetus' *Ekthesis* or 'mirror' for Justinian – may well have been composed there for an audience of elite students destined for government careers. As bearing on Justinian's program of imperial restoration under ideological unity, it glorifies Old Rome with an eye on the New Rome and the problems it faced.

The identities and authorship of two late sixth-century Alexandrian philosophers bearing the Christian names Elias and David are no longer as secure as formerly thought;[53] but their 'Introductions' to the study of philosophy and logic[54] show that there was still an audience in the lecture halls during the reigns of Justin II, Tiberius, and Maurice – an audience that kept hearing expressions of the familiar notion that philosophy is a Way (note, 'Way', something *done*) to approach the divine and to transform the individual soul.[55] The ethic of transformation was indeed the matter in play at this time, whether pagan (theurgy) or Christian of more than one doctrinal stance (the eucharist). Both varieties of Neoplatonism were concerned with the power of a ritual that could draw divine power – the power of a divine action in history that continued to act on and in the present – down into material things, things which in their turn could transform the participant and give him or her the feeling of conscious contact with the divine.[56] Both bishops and philosophers were carriers of this power.

Accordingly, when the absent miaphysite bishop Theodosius died in his Constantinopolitan detention in 566, it sparked a bitter succession struggle for the headship, with at least two rival candidates contending until the recognition of Peter IV in 575.[57] Though Justin II had originally been a miaphysite, he changed so radically to pro-Chalcedonianism that his reign came to be seen by separated Egyptian Christians as the opening of an era of outright persecution. A succession of Chalcedonian counter-bishops continued to be named for Alexandria, though their writ was hardly recognized outside the city. Yet nonetheless Philoponus continued to expound on logic as applied to miaphysite Christology, and on the Last Supper,[58]

[53] Wildberg, 'Elias' and 'David', cited above at note 10.

[54] Elias, who mentions the lighthouse of Alexandria (*CAG* 18.1: 141.7) and the poetry of Synesius of Cyrene (31.23–5), at least once explicitly disagrees with Philoponus (141.7). David interestingly relocates *Anth. Pal.* 9.137 from a grammarian addressing Hadrian to a Cynic philosopher addressing Julian (*CAG* 18.2: 32.31–33.5).

[55] Familiar to Egyptian Christians since Athanasius, and reinforced by the reception of the notion of *theôsis* in the Pseudo-Dionysius. Philoponus quotes *Theaetetus* 176B in the *Opificio* (6.7); Elias in his *Introduction to Philosophy* (*CAG* 18: 16.10).

[56] Thus since Origen: cf. Dawson 2002: 7, 11, 114, 127, 133, 214.

[57] Davis 2004: 107–9.

[58] MacCoull 1999.

the Trinity,[59] and the Resurrection. The last two topics got him into trouble with his co-confessionalists. At the end of his career he was accused of 'tritheism' (too literal-mindedly Aristotelian, according to some miaphysite prelates!), and his account of resurrection bodies – our souls will be downloaded into new and perfect bodies, not into the old ones reassembled – was not accepted. But at least some of his formulations were preserved, if not under his name, by the now separate Egyptian church.[60]

A BILINGUAL WORLD

Philoponus was helped by the rise of Coptic as a culture-carrying language, at a time when anti-Chalcedonian writings were being translated into vernacular non-governmental languages of the empire. (Except for the *Opificio* and *Pasch*, most of his works of explicitly Christian philosophy have been transmitted in Syriac translation.) Alongside the usual Greek documents, at about this time under Justinian's successors we for the first time find Coptic being chosen for contracts, leases, land transfers, and so on, alongside its longtime use for private letters.[61] The choice of a non-official language to preserve important matters of land title and inheritance, vital for society, must have been envisioned as advantageous for property owners who made that choice by commissioning Coptic-using notaries – notaries, that is, who knew and used both Greek and Coptic. The first datable documentary choices to use Coptic are for matters of property transfer and the disputes arising therefrom. Higher education,[62] philosophical education and the training of state officials, depended on landed wealth; so did the church, especially the separatist church with its endowed monastic support base funded by local *possessores*. Notaries who used the vernacular to serve such property-concerned clients (like Dioskoros of Aphrodite), natives of this bilingual world, quickly worked out a developed Coptic technical vocabulary and phraseology for the transactions they recorded – a vocabulary that blends Greek loanwords with vernacular translations, and a phraseology that both calques and semi-paraphrases Greek 'legalese', yielding what look at first like Byzantine Greek documents in Coptic dress.[63] Yet having them in Coptic dress apparently was important to at least some clients. The

[59] If there is a Trinitarian subtext to his doctrine of the fundamental three-dimensionality of matter (see Wildberg 2003), it has not yet been explored.

[60] In addition to older bibliography, especially on the 'tritheism' dispute, see MacCoull 2006a.

[61] MacCoull 2004b; 2004a.

[62] For elementary-level education in Coptic, see Cribiore 1999. The only extant evidence for the process of higher-level education in Coptic is its end product – an accomplished end product at that.

[63] See Richter 2002, esp. 1–8, 16–27, 71–9, 80–4, 106–35.

audience for Philoponus' works clearly was a bilingual one, formed in this bilingual provincial world; and often the form of a Philoponian citation from memory can be explained by the Coptic biblical text he seems to have known as well as the Greek.

The polymathic Philoponus was always more of a textual specialist – exegete and linguist[64] – than a 'professor of philosophy', and his experience with different text genres in both languages shows in his work. The paradox is that we have none of his writings in Coptic translation – perhaps owing to his falling out of favour. While it used to be thought that a language-register divide obtained, according to which Greek was the prestige vehicle for 'high style' philosophical and theological exposition that would have appeared unacceptable translated into a local vernacular, a look at the early Coptic fragment of Plato's *Republic*[65] shows that this was hardly the case. For a couple of centuries translators from source Greek into target Coptic in many fields, from the Bible to legal phraseology, had been working out a subtle and flexible hybrid medium that carried over numerous loanwords in place while deploying a blend of other loanwords and native words to render their originals.[66] Though not all scholars accept that a philosophical theologian like Philoponus knew his province's vernacular, the Coptic underlay to many of his expressions seems discernible.

LATER BYZANTINE TIMES

Maurice at his accession was a strong enforcer of Chalcedon, and his injunction that all official documents were to be prefaced with a religious invocation (initially an invocation of Christ)[67] was probably motivated by this desire for imposed visible unity at the level of the everyday paperwork people

[64] See Fladerer 1999.

[65] Codex VI.5; trans. J. Brashler (a translation still needing some revision) in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. J. M. Robinson, 4th rev. edn. (Leiden 1996) 318–20. The point is not so much the 'incapability of the Coptic language' (318; cf. S. K. Brown in *Coptic Encyclopedia* VI: 1981, 'vulgarizing' and 'inferior') as rather the stance of the gnosticizing redactor in this case. Since the text is in part concerned with 'image and likeness', the gnostic translator clearly knew the distinction in the Coptic version(s) of Genesis 1:26 between *eikón* = *hikôn* and *homoiôsis* = *eine*. An interesting translation technique can be seen, one by which, for example, the Greek word *dikaiosl dikaion* is simply taken over while its antonymic *adikosl adikein* is rendered by the native *ji nchons*, 'violent' (lit. 'taking force'); or where sometimes *lusitelein* is rendered by *r nofre*, 'do good', but elsewhere by a different loanword, *opheleia*. Once *ideai* becomes *morphê mn heneine*, 'shapes and likenesses'; sometimes *logos* remains *logos* but once it becomes *shaje*, 'word'. A philosophy audience must have long been prepared to receive material of this kind for study.

[66] Reintges 2001: 193–237; *idem*, 'Coptic Egyptian as a Bilingual Language Variety', conference paper 2002 (I thank him for a copy).

[67] See now Bagnall and Worp 2004: 99–109, 290–9.

in the villages would keep in their family archives. Having begun his career as a notary, he would have been aware of the message to be carried by such a blazon at the head of every transaction record. Maurice's historian, Theophylact Simocatta, was born and educated in Egypt, receiving the usual kind of literary/philosophical education expected by the late sixth-century governing class.[68] His account of Maurice's wars with Persia, composed under Heraclius, embodies a one-emperor-one-faith attitude in continuity with that of the political thought of Justinian's reign. Under Maurice's regime there seems to have been less encouragement of commentary on natural philosophy than what we can see reflected in Theophylact's writing.[69] At Alexandria the logic curriculum continued to be foundational, as seen in the introductions attributed to Elias and David (discussed above).

The latest Alexandrian (Christian) philosopher in our succession appears to be Stephanus,[70] possibly the one transferred to Constantinople by Heraclius soon after his accession in 610. We cannot reconstruct any vicissitudes the philosophical school may have suffered in the time of the troubles under Maurice and Phocas. Though the later John of Nikiou alleges that unrest wracked Egypt late in Maurice's reign, leading to famine and tax troubles, this does not seem to be borne out by the papyri.[71] To judge from the continuity of tax revenue collection in Egypt around the turn of the seventh century, there seems to have been no break in public funding.[72] Of the effects of later events (the Persian occupation, the imposition of a further succession of Chalcedonian anti-bishops of Alexandria – most famously John the Almoner – up to Cyrus the Colchian and his involvement with the Monothelete controversy) we have little or no concrete evidence. While Eulogius (580–608) continued as Chalcedonian bishop for Alexandria across the confused time of Phocas' imperial usurpation, the miaphysite reign of the Syrian-born Damian (578–607) is seen as a golden age of Coptic-language literary and cultural production.[73] His accession proclamation in the form of a synodal letter, prominently recorded in Coptic on the wall of a monastery in Upper Egypt,[74] condemns Philoponus (for 'tritheism') but does it in high philosophical style.

[68] Whitby 1988: 28–9. On Maurice as a notary, see 5–6; on his Christ-centred piety, see 22–3.

[69] Cf. Whitby 1988: 324–5.

[70] Wolska-Conus 1989. He was once thought to be the actual author of the third book of the *De anima* commentary under Philoponus' name: if so, this would show that the subject was still of interest to audiences in the changed circumstances of Maurice's and Phocas' reigns.

[71] Whitby 1988: 24. [72] Cf. Sheppard 2000: 843.

[73] Cf. *Coptic Encyclopedia* III: 688–9; V: 1455–6 for the Coptic writers of his time. It would be interesting to study the exegetical approach of Rufus of Hypselis (M. Sheridan, *Rufus of Shotep: Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (Rome 1998)) for its philosophical aspect and content.

[74] Winlock, Crum, and Evelyn White 1926: II.148–52 (text), 332–7 (transl.); MacCoull 1998b: 314–15.

CONCLUSIONS

In late antique Egypt philosophy was neither studied nor lived in an enclosed vacuum, cut off from the social and cultural topography of the surrounding world. Alexandria attracted students from all over the empire, students grounded in literature and rhetoric who went on to learn how to think, how to be citizens and human persons, and how to make sense of the universe they lived in. When the student returned to a nome metropolis to live and possibly hold office, the *paideia* stayed with him. From the sheer bulk of text it has long been apparent that the period 450–650[75] was a creative moment in the production of commentaries on the philosophical works of antiquity.[76] These commentaries are now being studied not, as in the past, just for their matter, but for what they can tell us about the world in which they were composed. This world, a fluid and contested world of cultural diglossia, was the one we know from documentary papyri (in both Greek and Coptic).

Doing philosophy in late antique Egypt was like weaving an elaborate counterpoint between the past – the curriculum subjects of *paideia* – and the concerns of the present. The commentaries in the *Commentaria ad Aristotelem Graeca* and on Plato were produced and received by people for whom the Greek of the fifth and fourth centuries BC was archaic and needed explication, of which there was a long tradition. The culturally contextualized language of Greek in bilingual Egypt empowered a renewal of Christian thought,[77] while Christian thought itself as elaborated by successive councils brought the impulse to surpass the ancients by taking them into the corpus of thought itself. As Fournet has shown, a blend of literary and documentary language yielded a flexible instrument for reading and comment. The language of the liturgy[78] had begun to interpenetrate that of philosophy; and philology too was philosophical, a style of thought embodied by Philoponus the 'grammarian' who carefully set out variant texts for the student. Those not accepting the ruling Christian ideology still engaged with relevant topics of the day, such as how to praise the (Christian) emperor.[79]

The philosophy commentators of Alexandria associated themselves with the possessors of wealth and power, often their students. Yet many were in

[75] Towards 750 what remained of Alexandria's 'philosophical school' may have been transferred to Syria by Marwan I; Gutas 1998: 190.

[76] See Wildberg 2005 for how the philosophical commentary was as a genre the prime vehicle for conveying the commentator's original ideas (cf. also Collins 1998: 793).

[77] Cf. Moss 2003: 36–7 – another useful comparandum from the later West.

[78] Cf. Cuming 1990. [79] Cf. Pazdernik 2005.

one way or another outsiders: non-Christians by dint of their paganism, anti-Chalcedonians through their refusal to accept imperially supported innovation. This mediating status helped them transmit the ancient subjects through very personal lenses. They composed works that benefit from being read with a papyrologist's eye. They crafted their own mental worlds through debate over the nature of truth and how it could be known. And they taught their students how to live in a changing world, by reading antiquity with the eyes of their own day.[80]

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[80] I would like to thank Marie-Hélène Congourdeau, Michael Maas, Kent Rigsby, Peter Sarris, Cynthia White, Christian Wildberg, and Constantine Zuckerman for sending me much-needed copies; and the Interlibrary Loan Service of Hayden Library, Arizona State University, for never giving up. – In loving memory, as always, of Mirrit Boutros Ghali (Threnoi 1:12a).

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CHAPTER 5

Coptic literature in the Byzantine and early Islamic world

Stephen Emmel

So far as one can tell from its fragmentary remains, Coptic literature was entirely religious in character and almost entirely Christian.[1] It emerges in the historical record of the Common Era from out of centuries of various types of experimentation – sporadic in character rather than organized and systematic – with how to represent the Egyptian language using the Greek alphabet, in particular with the aid of supplemental characters from Egypt's demotic writing system.[2] The oldest surviving manuscripts that are written in what is recognizable as the Coptic stage of Egyptian, and written according to more or less standardized, or at least systematic, norms of spelling, are perhaps as old as the third century AD.[3] The dating of such early Coptic manuscripts is hypothetical, being based almost entirely on typological criteria relating to handwriting and format (that is, palaeography and codicology), for which the main control at present is simply the analogous typology that has been worked out for the material remains of Greek literature, especially from Graeco-Roman and late antique Egypt.[4]

Students of the material remains of Coptic literature are inclined to assign the bulk of all the typologically earliest manuscripts to the fourth and fifth centuries. The Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century provides an approximate dividing point for the end of the first period of Coptic book production, after which the next large group of surviving manuscripts is dated, or assignable, to the ninth and later medieval centuries, into the twelfth. In the ninth century, dated colophons became relatively common

[1] 'Literature' is here narrowly defined, excluding documentary texts and subliterary genres (magic, medicine, pedagogy, etc.).
[2] See Quaegebeur 1982, 1991a, 1991b, and 1991c (also Quecke 1997); Kasser 1991a and 1991b; Satzinger 1991; Bagnall 2005.
[3] Only about half a dozen manuscripts and fragments are candidates for being assigned to so early a period. For a list, see Roberts 1979: 66–8, adding references to Kasser 1960, Diebner and Kasser 1989, and Goehring 1990. See further n. 25 below.
[4] The technical term for this method of dating is 'assign': a manuscript that is not explicitly 'dated' may be 'assigned' to a period of time on palaeographical or other such grounds.

in Coptic manuscripts, and by the end of the twelfth century Arabic had effectively replaced Coptic as the language of all Egypt. Materially, Coptic literature survives almost exclusively in codices,[5] made either of papyrus (typical of pre-conquest manuscripts), or parchment (typical of the earlier post-conquest manuscripts), or paper (typical of the later post-conquest manuscripts).

History has not been kind to Coptic literature, which is unfortunately noteworthy among the literatures of the Christian Orient for its extremely fragmentary and impoverished condition of survival. This condition is due in the first instance to the near-fatal blow to Coptic culture that the Arab conquest of Egypt turned out to be over the course of time. The Coptic language did not live on for very many centuries beyond that event, with the result that Coptic literature survived less by design than by pure chance, owing to the dry climate of Egypt south of the Nile Delta. In addition, the increasingly difficult circumstances of the Copts after the seventh-century conquest meant that much even of what has survived of Coptic literature has come down to us filtered through cultural circumstances that may well have altered, perhaps only to varying extents, but nonetheless in definitive ways, the character of that literature: nearly everything written in Coptic was finally subordinated to the needs of the Egyptian churches and monasteries, which by the tenth century were effectively the only bastions of Coptic (Christian) culture in what had become an Arabic-speaking and largely Islamic land. Not one single ancient Coptic manuscript is known that can be situated in Alexandria, the one city in Egypt in which we can trace a lively intellectual culture even well beyond the Arab conquest.[6] And to make matters yet more difficult, significant portions of what little did survive from elsewhere in Egypt were dispersed in the modern period, especially during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, so that now fragments of individual codices, sometimes even torn pieces of individual leaves, are to be found scattered across numerous libraries and museums in Egypt, Europe, North America, and elsewhere.

For these reasons, it is very difficult to present Coptic literature in a way that does not risk somehow falsifying its historical development, either by remaining too dependent on the present condition of the surviving evidence, or by relying too much on hypothesis or speculation in order to become independent of this condition. There is still much basic research waiting to be done, including reconstructing dismembered codices and

[5] Very few Coptic book rolls are known. See further Emmel 1998.
[6] Cf. Müller 1954: 269.

identifying and editing the texts contained in them, quite apart from pursuing questions of textual criticism and the higher levels of literary criticism, including translation, all of which must be presupposed by any adequate literary history. It was observed thirty years ago that 'studies in [C]optic literature are no further advanced today than classical philology was in the fifteenth century',[7] and, despite significant progress in many areas in the intervening decades, the situation is not yet much different.

Tito Orlandi, author of the statement just quoted, is the only scholar in recent years who has ventured to offer anything like a 'history of Coptic literature', having published a series of summaries of the general results of his investigations throughout the closing three decades of the last century.[8] On many points in Orlandi's historical reconstruction there is common agreement. But given the state of research in Coptic literature, no one should be surprised if the history sketched out by him has to be changed in a variety of ways as research progresses. On the whole, his work must be approached as a set of intertwining hypotheses waiting to be tested by other scholars by means of their own detailed case studies.

One critic of this reconstruction, Enzo Lucchesi, has taken particular issue with Orlandi's characterization of Coptic literature during its formative period as basically simple and without intellectual sophistication. Orlandi's view is dependent on his explanation for the existence of many pre-conquest translations of Greek Patristic authors that were transmitted in Coptic with false attributions, where one famous name has merely been replaced with another, without there being any clearly discernible motive for doing so.[9] His explanation is to suggest 'that during this period [the later fourth and earlier fifth centuries] the Copts chose texts for translation without considering the name of the author very seriously. It is even possible that in the beginning texts circulated anonymously, only to have an author assigned to them later on', or that there were mistaken attributions already in the Greek manuscripts from which the translations were made. In Orlandi's view, the effective anonymity of much of this corpus of translations reflects the basic motivation for producing the translations in the first place: 'The material selected for translation seems to have been

[7] Orlandi 1978: 143.
[8] Especially Orlandi 1970: 57–158; 1978 (see 143–6 for references to earlier discussions of 'Coptic literature'); 1986 (note esp. 52); 1990; 1991b (with 1991a and many related articles in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*); 1995; 1997; 1998. Orlandi's most recent results appear on the website of his project 'Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari' (see http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/~cmcl). Consult also Krause 1979 and Coquin 1993.
[9] Such false attributions are to be distinguished from purposeful post-conquest pseudepigraphy: see Orlandi 1991b: 1456–8.

chosen chiefly according to the requirements of a special section of Egyptian society, the monastic groups', or simply in accordance with 'whatever the "normal" market was offering, a market geared more for popular consumption than for the demands of an "official" level. Accordingly, the needs of pleasing simply educated people were also considered.' This 'peculiar choice of material' shows that 'the Coptic preference was rather for the minor production of [the church fathers of the time] such as individual [h]omilies preserved in Greek (if at all) in secondary collections'. 'In vain we look for basic texts such as the Armenian translation of Irenaeus, or the Syriac translation of the works of Severus of Antioch, not to mention the most important homiletical, theological, and historical works of the church fathers of the time' ('like Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, even Athanasius').[10]

Lucchesi has criticized Orlandi's explanation as perpetuating a prejudiced and outdated view of the ancient Copts.[11] In reply, he and others have pointed out evidence for Coptic translations of dogmatic and philosophical Patristic works, even of 'corpora' of such works, whose existence would seem to contradict Orlandi's general characterization of classical Coptic translation literature.[12] Lucchesi's conclusion from this discrepancy in points of view is to 'recommend a prudent reserve particularly when it comes to making judgements of general import regarding the essence of Coptic literature, still today unfortunately too little or too poorly known, despite all that can be said about it', reminding us that it is all too easy to forget how much damage has been wrought by the 'vicissitudes of fortune'.[13]

Of course it may never be possible for us to reconstruct even the general shape of Coptic literature before the period from which the vast majority of our manuscripts comes (which is at least several centuries after the Arab conquest), but we will be able to do the best we can only after we have the most extensive collection of data possible. And in this respect, one desideratum stands out above all others, namely the reconstruction and publication of the widely scattered remains of the largest Coptic library yet known, the library of the so-called 'White Monastery' of Shenoute, which is our richest source by far for works of classical Coptic literature.[14] But here too we face the problem of the relatively late dates of the surviving manuscripts. For the bulk of the White Monastery codices (all of them parchment, except

[10] Orlandi 1991b: 1453–4; 1978: 151–4; 1986: 71–2; 1998: 135–6.
[11] Recently, see especially Lucchesi 2004.
[12] Lucchesi and Devos 1981; Coquin and Lucchesi 1981; Lucchesi 1981; 1998; 2004; 2005.
[13] Lucchesi 1981: 95 n. 2.
[14] For a recent summary of the history of this task, with special reference to the works of Shenoute, see Emmel 2004b: I.18–28; see also Orlandi 2002.

perhaps for a few scraps of paper) either are dated in the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth centuries, or else are assignable to the same period; a few are perhaps assignable to earlier centuries, but very few give a firm impression of being pre-conquest. Given that we have much the same problem with most of our other main sources of Coptic manuscripts, it might be useful to have a detailed survey of what is known of Coptic literature only from manuscripts that are datable or assignable with reasonable certainty to the third through seventh centuries.[15] Such a survey does not yet exist (and has not been undertaken here). But in any case, even though its result might have the advantage of methodological rigour, surely it would present only a part of the whole story. Students of Coptic literature are still searching for methods – as well as for more materials – that can help them to write something more likely to approximate the whole story.

COPTIC LITERATURE IN GENERAL

Coptic literature knows only one truly remarkable individual author, a late antique monastic leader named Shenoute (347–465). But another remarkable component of Coptic literature is translations of primary Manichaean and 'gnostic' literature,[16] and Coptic is also noteworthy for preserving a significant number of apocryphal biblical (especially New Testament) works – many of them gnostic in character – that would otherwise be completely or largely unknown. Discoveries of Coptic translations of works like the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Epistula Apostolorum*, the *Gospel of Mary*, the so-called *Gospel of the Saviour*, and the recently recovered *Gospel of Judas* continue to enrich our knowledge of early Christianity in its spread and evolution all around the Mediterranean.[17]

The rest of Coptic literature can be described as including – apart from the Christian Bible, which is ubiquitous – a large body of Christian hagiographical literature (lives of saints, including martyrs, monks, and bishops, in various genres, often mixed, including biography, passion, miracle,

[15] Forerunners of such an undertaking are W. E. Crum's chapter ('Literature') in Winlock, Crum, and Evelyn White 1926: I.196–208, and Kahle 1954: I.269–74, giving a list (now needing some revision) of Coptic manuscripts thought to be earlier than the sixth century.
[16] The term 'gnostic' is used here in a broad and historically imprecise way (in contrast to the usage advocated by Layton 1995; cf. Emmel 2002). The relevant bibliography is vast (cf. Krause 1979: 707–10, adding a reference to Scholer 1997); as convenient starting points, consult Layton 1987 for gnostic literature, and Gardner and Lieu 2004 for Manichaean literature.
[17] Consult Krause 1979: 697–707; Coquin 1993: 190 and 197–200; Schneemelcher 1991–2; Elliott 1993; Bovon et al. 1997–2005; Schneemelcher 1990–7; for the *Gospel of the Saviour*, see Emmel 2003 and 2005b; the *Gospel of Judas* is to be published by R. Kasser and G. Wurst.

encomium, sermon, and romance),[18] which overlaps with an equally large body of edifying and moralistic sermons (which may take the form of an encomium, or an exegesis of a biblical passage, and so on),[19] which overlaps in turn with another large corpus, namely liturgical texts in a stricter sense (some of which, of course, cannot necessarily be regarded as 'literature' narrowly defined). Less numerous are works that may be classified as treatises or literary epistles, and seemingly rare and uncommon are works with historical intentions. Of the latter, the only noteworthy survivals are the work known as the *Coptic Church History* (which, however, has much in common with the hagiographical literature)[20] and John of Nikiou's *Chronicle of World History* (which survives only in an Ethiopic translation made from an Arabic translation).[21] While some religious poetry is known apart from hymns and other specifically liturgical compositions,[22] novels or anything vaguely resembling secular literature are effectively non-existent (although the hagiographical literature sometimes makes extensive and clever use of novelistic style); the only two works worth mentioning in this regard are the so-called *Alexander Romance* and *Cambyses Romance*.[23]

THE BASES OF COPTIC LITERATURE: THE COPTIC BIBLE AND SHENOUTE

Whereas the earliest attempts to write Egyptian using the Greek alphabet supplemented by Egyptian demotic characters (I mean both the so-called 'Old Coptic' and 'Pre-Coptic' texts[24]) do not show any significant signs of influence from Greek literature as such, attesting only some degree of fundamental literacy in Greek, the earliest examples of the Coptic writing system proper (which can be seen as early products of a concerted, if not necessarily fully organized, effort to *standardize* something akin to the surviving Old Coptic and Pre-Coptic experimentations) are mostly translations from the Greek Bible, that is, from the Septuagint and the New Testament. Apart from biblical books (mostly from the Old Testament, and including 2 Macc. 5:27–7:41 as an excerpt headed 'The Martyrs of the Jews Who Lived under Antiochus the King'), these very early Coptic texts include only Melito of

[18] For a convenient sample of this literature, with English translations, see Reymond and Barns 1973; Depuydt 1993.
[19] For a convenient sample, see Depuydt 1991.
[20] For the texts, see Orlandi 1968–70; Johnson 1976; Orlandi 1985.
[21] Zotenberg 1883 (cf. Zotenberg 1877–9); Charles 1916.
[22] See Kuhn 1991; Krause 1979: 717; Coquin 1993: 212.
[23] See Müller 1991; Krause 1979: 716–17; Coquin 1993: 196.
[24] See the references in n. 2 above.

Sardis *On the Passover* and an unidentified homiletic (?) work.[25] This fact alone warrants the hypothesis that it was the Christian church in Egypt that undertook to standardize and promote the Coptic writing system, and there is an inherent historical logic to the assumption that the church did so in the interest of missionization beyond the limits of the Greek-speaking cities of Egypt. However, such a reconstruction is perhaps most convincing if it is placed only after the end of the Great Persecution in Egypt (313), or even after the triumph of Constantine (324), the Council of Nicaea (325), and the accession of Athanasius as bishop of Alexandria (328).[26] But by that time there was another major religious missionary movement underway in the Roman empire, equally interested in making translations of sacred texts into local languages, namely the Manichaeans. And in fact some of the most remarkable early Coptic codices (made of papyrus and assignable to the fourth or fifth century) are products of a Manichaean community in Upper Egypt,[27] while recent excavations in Dakhla Oasis have turned up evidence for Manichaean translation activity from Syriac into Coptic in a town there in the fourth century.[28]

It is no surprise that an illiterate language (such as Egyptian was just prior to the Byzantine period) received its first major push into literacy from a carefully crafted translation, which could then serve as an inspiration and a standard for subsequent writers or translators. Even if the Coptic version of the Bible could be shown to have been produced in competition with slightly earlier translation and publication projects by Manichaeans (or even gnostics of some sort), this would not alter the fact that it was the Christian Bible that became the enduring foundational monument of Coptic literature, just as it was eventually the Christian church, and especially its monasteries, in whose care Coptic literature flourished and survived to the extent that it did. And it was a late antique Coptic monastic leader named Shenoute whose prophetic inspiration and talent for eloquence, both of them nourished by a thorough knowledge of the Coptic Bible, led to the creation of the only other truly outstanding literary achievement in Coptic.

[25] For the latter, Goehring 1990: 1–79 and 261–76 respectively. See further Orlandi 1978: 146–51; 1986: 53–5; 1998: 120–1; cf. n. 3 above.
[26] Cf. Roberts 1979: 64 n. 4, referring to G. Mink.
[27] But discovered in the Fayyum Oasis; see, for example, Richter 2005.
[28] See, for example, Gardner 1997. A similar hypothesis that it was gnostics, or some 'gnosticizing' group, who created the first standardized Coptic writing system to undertake a programme of translation is more fraught with difficulties than the two other possibilities, but still worth mentioning (cf. Roberts 1979: 63–72, a not entirely satisfactory discussion, but useful and provocative; Orlandi 1986: 55–7).

If even only a certain portion of the roughly one hundred surviving manuscripts of Shenoute's works had survived completely, we would have a corpus of nearly 200 works, the bulk of them transmitted in two organized sets of nine and eight volumes, respectively his *Canons* and his *Discourses* (or *Logoi*). As it is, we have extensive fragments of this remarkable corpus, but relatively few works are known that have survived completely from beginning to end, and only about half of what survives has yet been published, relatively little of it in a satisfactory fashion. Still less has been translated accurately into any modern language. However, recent work on Shenoute's corpus has already succeeded in making him much more accessible and better known than he was even a decade ago, and the upcoming generation of scholars is already able to make use of his works in ways that were scarcely imaginable a century ago.

Shenoute produced his corpus of writings across a period of about eighty years, beginning not too long before he became, probably around 385, the head of his monastery at the edge of the western desert across the Nile from Panopolis (modern Akhmim), and continuing to within a decade of his death in 465. His earliest works, two long open letters addressed to his community in the midst of a crisis that challenged the spiritual leadership of the then head, already displayed Shenoute's literary consciousness.[29] Sometime after succeeding his disgraced predecessor, Shenoute himself combined these two letters in a single volume that was to be read by or to all members of the community four times each year. This volume thus became the first in what eventually grew to be a set of nine volumes (the *Canons*) that Shenoute himself compiled across the many years of his long tenure as head of the monastery. The works in these volumes combine with the many other works of Shenoute – especially sermons of varying lengths, several open letters to residents of Panopolis, and perhaps some treatises or tracts – to form a corpus that one can well imagine Shenoute himself having thought of as a kind of Coptic counterpart to similar corpora that he might have known and admired in Greek, such as the works of Athanasius or the Cappadocian fathers, for example.

I do mean to say 'in Greek', for there is no good reason to doubt that Shenoute was capable of both reading and speaking Greek, and therefore also of writing it with at least some facility. In fact, the question of the extent to which Shenoute not only knew Greek, but had also been trained in it, is important for understanding and evaluating his literary achievement. Not

[29] See further Emmel 2004a. For a brief overview of Shenoute, see Emmel 2005a.

that there is any serious doubt about his fundamental 'Copticity',[30] but the question of the sources of his inspiration and of his rhetorical skills depends heavily on what we imagine him as having read, especially during his youth. Certainly he read and studied the Coptic Bible, and it seems that he also knew the Greek Bible well, but what else? And what did Shenoute read *in Coptic* during his formative years? Suffice it here to suggest that knowledge of the Coptic Bible (deeply, in fact fundamentalistically, revered as inspired and authoritative) plus probably both rhetorical and notarial training in Greek (and in Coptic, such as it may have been in the middle of the fourth century) seems in the case of Shenoute to have combined with inherent genius to produce an extraordinary personage gifted with eloquence in a language that up until then had hardly any original (i.e. not translated) literary tradition to speak of. The only names to be mentioned here as authors of original Coptic literature prior to Shenoute are Pachomius, perhaps also St Antony (if he did not write his letters in Greek) and Paul of Tamma,[31] and still more doubtfully the poorly attested Hieracas.[32] In Orlandi's opinion, these 'first manifestations of original Coptic literature involved a rejection of "literature" as such', and Shenoute's 'style . . . has no Coptic precedent'.[33] Indeed, one should 'appreciate the enormous effort that it must have required to raise the Coptic language – which up until then, so far as we know, had been used only [*sic*] for translation – to the level of a completely independent, literary language'.[34]

Some day there will be interesting studies of the variety of Shenoute's rhetorical devices and of his playfulness with language (even if he normally played only with a grim purpose). Something of the special character of Shenoute's language is due to his way of mixing formal rhetoric and biblical quotations and reminiscences with what seem to be everyday colloquialisms and lower-register informality. It is becoming increasingly clear that this 'style' of Shenoute's is to be accounted for, at least in part, by his works being written records of spoken language: it is a reasonable hypothesis that Shenoute dictated most, perhaps even all, of his correspondence (whether addressed to individuals or to communities, including even his own), and that his sermons were taken down by stenographers while he spoke extemporaneously. Since Shenoute lived as a hermit, some distance

[30] Although the well-documented fact that modern scholars have sometimes wrongly attributed to Shenoute Coptic works that can be shown to be translations from Greek has led especially Lucchesi to raise questions that challenge the basic feasibility of distinguishing neatly between Coptic translation literature and original Coptic literature. See n. 65 below.

[31] On whom see Orlandi 1988 and Lucchesi 1995.

[32] See further Krause 1979: 710–2; Coquin 1993: 200–1; Orlandi 1986: 60–4 and 1998: 129–31.

[33] Orlandi 1986: 63 and 69. [34] Orlandi 1998: 134.

removed from his monastery, and communicated with the residents of his community by means of letters, he expected these letters to be read aloud to assembled monks (both at the time they were delivered, and on suitable later occasions), be they male (as in the main monastery and in the smaller Monastery of Pshoi 3 km to the northwest) or female (as in the third member monastery, located in a village to the south called Atripe).[35] Unlike these letters, at least a selection of which Shenoute himself compiled in the nine volumes of his *Canons*, probably we owe the written transmission of a selection of his sermons (mainly in the eight volumes of his *Discourses*, but also apart from this organized corpus) to their being used by subsequent generations of monks in Shenoute's monastery for liturgical reading during worship services.[36]

COPTIC TRANSLATION LITERATURE

Given the remarkable nature of Shenoute's literary achievement, and the force of his personality, it is possible that much or even all of the *translation* work that was undertaken between the end of the fourth century and the Arab conquest was done under Shenoute's direction or inspiration.[37] Some of this Coptic translation literature is of great value either for things it preserves that we might have had in Greek or some other language, but we do not (for example, parts of the corpus of Athanasius' Festal Letters,[38] or the unique Coptic apocryphal literature), or for its text- and literary-critical value.[39] Furthermore, there are works, or fragments of works, preserved in Coptic that are thought to be translations (presumably, and most probably, from Greek), but which remain thus far unidentified and therefore might eventually contribute to our knowledge of the corpora of Patristic authors (for example, the so-called 'Berlin Coptic Book'[40]).

Some Coptologists of the current generation are inclined to work against a view of Coptic literature as primarily an ancillary resource for New Testament and Patristic scholarship (a view according to which the Greek

[35] On the tripartite division of Shenoute's 'monastic federation', see Layton 2002; on the women's monastery, see Krawiec 2002 (cf. Behlmer 2004).

[36] On the bibliographical structure of Shenoute's transmitted corpus, and for a survey of its contents, see Emmel 2004b.

[37] This hypothesis was suggested by J. Leipoldt a century ago (1909: 154) and has been accepted by Orlandi (1986: 70 at n. 63; 1991b: 1453*b*; 1998: 135) despite his awareness that 'there is no direct evidence for this [claim]' (2002: 211 with n. 7).

[38] See, for example, Camplani 1989.

[39] See, for example, Lucchesi 1981.

[40] Schenke Robinson 2004.

Vorlage, even if hypothetical, is always the primary object of interest), preferring instead to emphasize that even translation literature can and should be understood in its Coptic cultural context. In other words, the interest of a piece of Coptic translation literature should not end once its Greek *Vorlage* has been identified. Rather, one must still ask when, where, and why it was translated, and how and why it was altered during its transmission.

Indeed, with regard to a literature such as the one being presented here, there is no compelling reason to exclude translations from consideration, as we might do in the case of modern literatures, generally speaking. In fact, there are good reasons to include translation literature within our purview, methodologically because often we cannot distinguish with certainty between translation literature and original Coptic literature, and also fundamentally because it is likely that the majority of Coptic speakers made no such distinction. Translated literature was for them, so far as we can tell, as much a part of 'Coptic literature' as was original literature, even if they knew (or merely thought they knew, misled by pseudepigraphy or misattribution) that the author of a given work was a non-Egyptian or a non-Coptic speaker. It is not certain that native Coptic speakers could distinguish between original and translated literature any more easily than we can, and quite probably they were much less motivated even to try.

Such considerations raise the further question of what difference it makes to us whether a given work of Coptic literature is a translation or not. Of course the phenomenon of translation is interesting in and of itself, and certainly there are various respects in which this distinction is, or might be, of critical importance in specific cases. But on the whole, and especially in the present context, the main interest of the distinction is the resulting search for undeniably *Coptic* literature in the sense that it was created by native speakers of Coptic, whose experience and view of the world was thus shaped by that language and its culture. This is the literature that we should regard as most essentially 'Coptic', and this is the literature that might eventually – if Coptic culture had not been transformed and stunted first by military and political conquest and later by religious and linguistic repression – have produced the kind of self-reflective and insightfully enriching corpora that one expects from a well-developed literate culture nurtured by a long tradition of intelligent and sensitive native speakers who undertake to express or reflect their experience of life and the world in written form, intending their writing to be shared with a wide public.

SEARCHING FOR ORIGINAL COPTIC LITERATURE: SHENOUTE'S SUCCESSORS

The oral aspect of Shenoute's corpus, discernible both in its creation and in the main purpose of its transmission (as already discussed), underscores an omnipresent characteristic of Coptic literature as a whole: the vast bulk of it, so far as we yet know it, was composed either for, or in the act of, public declamation in the context of Christian worship. In so far as it was transmitted, it was transmitted as 'living (liturgical) literature',[41] which could be altered in the course of transmission to suit new times, places, and needs. This characteristic can be demonstrated almost whenever we have multiple copies of a work, in that each copy will likely show more or less significant and sometimes far-reaching variants over against any other copies.[42] In this literature – mostly hagiographic and homiletic – it is not easy to discern individual authorial voices, perhaps both because of editing in the course of transmission and because the genres themselves tended to be treated as formalized to the point of excluding idiosyncracy.

An example is Shenoute's successors and imitators, who had to compose (whether by dictation or otherwise) sermons and letters in the large and dark shadow of the great latter-day prophet: Besa,[43] Shenoute's immediate successor, is mostly quite bland in comparison with his master, and heavily dependent on quoting from the Bible; John the archimandrite[44] is – a few extraordinary passages notwithstanding – repetitive in his imitation of Shenoute's hortatory mode; the author (?) known as 'Pseudo-Shenoute'[45] seems at times almost to have worked from texts of Shenoute using scissors and paste (but selecting only rather trite passages to copy). One can

[41] I borrow this expression from Bradshaw 2002, which I know only from Lubomierski 2005: 179–81.

[42] The only salient exceptions to this rule are the Bible and Shenoute's works (although both of these corpora also show signs of editing in the course of transmission). Of course there are other causes of manuscript variants as well, and Coptic was not the only language with a tradition of 'living literature' (on this phenomenon in Greek, see Müller 1954: 269 n. 77, citing A. Erhard).

[43] See the nearly complete edition of what survives of Besa's letters and sermons by Kuhn 1956 (this edition includes some fragments of Shenoute's works: see Emmel 2004b: II.937–8, cf. 559 and 566) and 1984. I do not believe that Besa was the author of the so-called 'Life of Shenoute' (see Keil 1978: 40–1; and several forthcoming publications by N. Lubomierski, including her 2005 Berlin Th.D. dissertation).

[44] His 'Canon' has not yet been published (apart from a few fragments), nor has he yet been clearly delineated as a distinct author: see the discussions in *P.Ryl.Copt.* 65 and *P.Lond.Copt.* 85, and also Emmel 2004b: I.91–2 and II.887–98 *passim* (showing how often fragments of this author's work have been attributed mistakenly by modern scholars to Shenoute). The work discussed by Horn 1986, §§2–4, as a work of Shenoute (see pp. 15–16), belongs to John's corpus.

[45] Ed. Kuhn 1960 (see *CSCO* 206: v–vi, for Kuhn's characterization of the author and his work; cf. Shisha-Halevy 1975: 151 n. 13, who hypothesized 'that "Pseudo-Shenoute" represents a stratifiable mixture of distinct Shenoutian and extraneous elements, rather than a homogeneous non-Shenoutian text simply and falsely attributed to Shenoute').

praise these authors for a certain 'mastery of the Coptic language',[46] which in Orlandi's opinion was not achieved again until the time of Damianus, bishop of Alexandria from the last quarter of the sixth century until 605. Around that time, a group of authors displays 'a language . . . which has at last become independent of the Greek model and self-sufficient in its syntactical and stylistic elements', a style of which Shenoute 'is to be understood as a precursor'.[47] These authors, so far as they are known to us from the few of their works that survive, are the following:[48]

- Pisentius of Koptos (569–632), from whom we have an encomium *On Onnophrios* and the beginning of another sermon (*P.Lond.Copt.* II 167.1, a fragment of a papyrus codex probably from the seventh century[49]), as well as an archive of his ephemeral correspondence.
- Constantine of Siout (*c.* 550–640): two encomia *On Athanasius*; two *On Claudius*, the martyr; and one *On George*, the martyr; an encomium *On Shenoute* is known unfortunately only by title.
- Rufus of Shotep (*c.* 600): a series of sermons (in the form of exegetical commentaries) *On the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.*
- John of Shmun (*c.* 600): an encomium *On Antony* and one *On Mark*, the evangelist.
- John of Parallos (*c.* 600): a sermon (*logos*) *On the Archangel Michael and on Heretical Books.*[50]

These names stand out mainly because they can be viewed as a kind of group to which attention is drawn in the Arabic church historical source known as the 'History of the Patriarchs (of Alexandria)'.[51] But even if we take the latter as proof that these men really did exist, here too the question of the authenticity of the attributions in our manuscripts can be taken as still open. Given the amount of pseudepigraphy and misattribution that we know of in our manuscripts, why should we trust the attributions of works to these particular names? In fact, the attribution to a Coptic bishop *c.* 600 of such typically 'Alexandrian' (even 'Origenist') exegetical sermons as those that have been transmitted under the name of Rufus of Shotep has been challenged by Enzo Lucchesi and Philippe Luisier,[52] both of whom

[46] Orlandi 1986: 70, referring to Besa.

[47] Orlandi 1986: 75–7 (the quotation is from 76); 1970: 97–106; 1991b: 1455–6; 1998: 144–5; 1997: 113–20. See also Krause 1979: 713–14; Coquin 1993: 202–3. Bishop Damianus himself does not belong to this group of authors, for Coptic was not his native language, and he composed in Greek and perhaps also Syriac (Orlandi 1991b: 1455*b*).

[48] References to editions and translations (also to other minor or little-known works of these authors) can be found in the publications of Orlandi, Krause, and Coquin listed in n. 8 above.

[49] Winlock, Crum, and Evelyn White 1926: I.204 with n. 1.

[50] Cf. Müller 1954: 244–5.

[51] Evetts 1904–15: 213 (*PO* 1.4: 477); cf. Garitte 1950: 297–8.

[52] Lucchesi 2000 and 2002; Luisier 1998; for a reply, see Sheridan 2003.

prefer to see in these sermons translations of works that were written in Greek in the late fourth or early fifth century. On the other hand, there exist more works attributed to men who lived before the Arab conquest and who very likely preached in Coptic rather than Greek that might deserve to be considered as original Coptic literature: for example, Makarios of Tkow (d. 451), from whom we have a sermon *On Michael*, the archangel[53]; Isaac of Antinoopolis (dates unknown), from whom we have an encomium *On Colluthus*[54]; or Phoibammon of Shmin (dates unknown), from whom also we have an encomium *On Colluthus*, with an indication that it was his second in honour of that martyr.[55]

From the time of the Arab conquest itself and shortly after, we have a few works, or fragments of works, of presumably original Coptic literature from the following authors:[56]

Benjamin, bishop of Alexandria (626–65), from whom we have a sermon *On the Marriage at Cana* and two fragments concerning Shenoute.[57]

Agathon (Benjamin's successor, 665–81): a fragment of a sermon, the attribution of which is hypothetical.[58]

John III (Agathon's successor, 681–9): an encomium *On Menas*, the martyr; and two dialogues (in which John appears as one of the interlocutors), one known as the *Questions of Theodore*, the other as the *Controversy of John III*, although it is not clear to me that these two dialogues should be considered as works of John rather than as anonymous works about him.[59]

John of Nikiou (end of the seventh century): although it survives only in an Ethiopic version translated from Arabic, John's *Chronicle of World History* was likely composed originally in Coptic,[60] and it deserves mention here as a unique specimen of this genre in this language.[61]

Menas of Nikiou (John's successor, early eighth century): an encomium *On Macrobius*, the bishop and martyr; and a *Life of Isaac*, patriarch of Alexandria.

[53] Lafontaine 1979.

[54] Ed. S. E. Thompson in Depuydt 1993: I.46–83 and II.37–64; cf. Emmel and South 1996.

[55] Till 1935–6: I.168–81. On the uncertainty of the dates of the last two authors named, see Timm 1984–92: I.113 and n. 9 on p. 125.

[56] Orlandi 1986: 77–8; 1991b: 1456; 1998: 146 (I omit Isaac of Qalamūn because he 'can be dated approximately to the first half of the ninth century' (Coquin 1991; cf. Coquin 1993: 204), which is well beyond the limits set for this volume). See also Krause 1979: 715–16; Coquin 1993: 203–4. For the dates of the Alexandrian patriarchs from 500 to 700, I follow Jülicher 1922.

[57] Cf. Müller 1954: 232–5.

[58] See Müller 1959: 334–6.

[59] Note the comment by Graf 1944–53: I.479.

[60] Altheim and Stiehl 1971–3: I.356 with n. 1; P. M. Fraser in *Coptic Encyclopedia* v: 1366–7.

[61] See n. 21 above.

Zacharias of Xois (also early eighth century): two sermons, one of them *On the Lord's Coming to Jerusalem as a Boy*, the other *On Repentence*[62]; and an encomium (*bios*) *On John Kolobos*.[63]

The problem in the realm of original Coptic literature is immediately apparent: from none of these authors do we have anything like a corpus that suffices to allow us to get to know them as individual personalities, as we can get to know Shenoute. For us, they remain shadows or at best fleeting images, faint beacons proclaiming the existence of a literature that has been all but lost. It even seems that there is not yet enough evidence to disprove with complete conviction what Lucchesi has proposed as 'the golden rule with regard to translations of sacred texts in the Nile valley and on the horn of Africa', namely that 'every Ethiopic translation is based, in principle, on an Arabic model, just as every Egyptian Arabic translation presupposes, in the absence of proof to the contrary, an underlying Coptic text, which presupposes in turn a Greek original'.[64] Lucchesi has not shrunk from challenging even Shenoute's claim to being our original Coptic author par excellence.[65]

Nonetheless, students of Coptic literature *for its own sake* should continue the search for original Coptic literature that can inspire us with the same sense of respect and admiration that we have for Shenoute, even if we can hardly hope to find another Coptic corpus of comparable richness and interest. The process of searching, which consists above all in reconstructing the physical remains of Coptic literature and identifying the contents of the manuscripts, is an intellectual enterprise that is both demanding and rewarding, offering in and of itself a challenge to any scientifically inquiring mind.

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[62] See Müller 1954: 237–9.

[63] Hopfner (1918: 3 (see especially n. 1) and 33–7) argued that Zacharias merely translated a Greek text into Coptic.

[64] Lucchesi 1998: 114. A corollary of this rule is that translation literature in other Oriental and African languages, especially Arabic, Ethiopic, Syriac, and Old Nubian, must be taken into account in the reconstruction of Coptic literature (Lucchesi 2004: 297).

[65] Lucchesi 1988; for a reply, see Depuydt 1990.

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CHAPTER 6

Early Christian architecture in Egypt and its relationship to the architecture of the Byzantine world

Peter Grossmann

Constantinople was without doubt the leading cultural centre of the late Roman empire, the acknowledged origin of most important cultural and artistic developments. This leadership was also, I shall argue in this chapter, present in the field of architecture, where some scholars have assigned Egypt a more central role.

Until recently, evidence for the origins of late antique architecture in Egypt was scarce. No accurately dated monument of the fourth century was known, even though a number of quite impressive churches of the fifth century had been documented. Indeed, even some buildings which were understood as foundations of the fourth century turned out to have been dated too early; such revisions have not always prevented serious misunderstandings based on the earlier datings. The most famous example is the Great Basilica of Abu Mina, dated according to some later Coptic sources to the reign of the emperor Arcadius (395–408), but now known from the modern excavations to have been founded in the late fifth century.

Over time, however, this situation has improved. We now know of a number of churches securely dated to all the relevant early Christian centuries, among which there are even some examples from as early as the first decades of the fourth century. Buildings are now dated from carefully observed and recorded stratigraphic excavations, where the contexts of pottery and coins are well documented, rather than from misleading historical sources or guesswork. With these far more reliable data, we are now in a position to recognize some of the local differences between the architectural developments that took place within Egypt and to contrast the differences observable between Upper and Lower Egypt.

Architectural developments in Egypt and their relationship with those of the Byzantine world are best illustrated in church architecture. Churches enjoyed a special status in the built environment, as structures where builders were likely to be most attentive and for which donors were most generous. Emperors who lavished enormous energy and resources on their

palaces only to have them rejected as unsuitable by their successors always regarded the construction of a church as a superior project. The best representatives of this attitude are Constantine the Great and Justinian I, both of whom were responsible for founding numerous churches which, in time, became leading examples of their periods.

Before going on to examine the relationship between late antique church architecture in Egypt and Byzantium, we need to examine the physical appearance of Egyptian churches of this period. Of course, only a few representative examples can be chosen, and because there are some notable differences between Upper and Lower Egyptian architectural traditions, each has to be examined separately. Nevertheless, it is important to remember an important proviso: the known examples from Lower Egypt come exclusively from the Mediterranean coastal region, mainly from areas west of Alexandria but also from Pelusium, that is, from the ancient provinces of Augustamnica and Lower Libya. As no examples are known from the rest of Lower Egypt itself, that is the whole of the Nile Delta region[1] (the ancient province of *Aegyptus*), the phrase 'Northern Egypt' will be used here to emphasize the coastal region as distinct from the Delta.

Throughout Egypt, as in other parts of the empire, the predominant church type was the three- or five-aisled basilica with the main axis pointing east–west. An apse was positioned at the narrow east end, flanked on both sides by at least two side chambers (*pastophoria*). At the west end there was sometimes a transverse hall, the 'narthex' as it was called by the historian Procopius.[2] The church entrances were usually on the north or south sides, only rarely at the west end. Because almost all the known examples of early churches in Egypt at this time are provincial, the apses are very seldom well developed. It might be assumed that in the cities, where skilled workmen were more readily available, this feature would have been more accurately executed.

The ancient provinces of Upper Egypt, the Nile Valley south of modern Cairo, were Arcadia (previously Heptanomia) and Thebais. The churches of the Thebaid exhibit much the same ground plan as those described above. They differ in only one way, by the common addition of a complete ambulatory formed by joining the lateral aisles at the east and west ends with additional transverse passages. This had the effect of surrounding the larger central space on all four sides with an open walkway (**Figs.** 6.1–2). At the

[1] One of the few exceptions is a recently discovered small basilica at Tell Qabrit to the northwest of Buto, cf. Wilson et al. 2003: 3 fig. 2 pl. 1; the site has to be identified with the ancient village of Κοπρίθειος κώμη, mentioned by George of Cyprus 715.

[2] Procop, *De aed.* 1.4.7; 5.6.23.

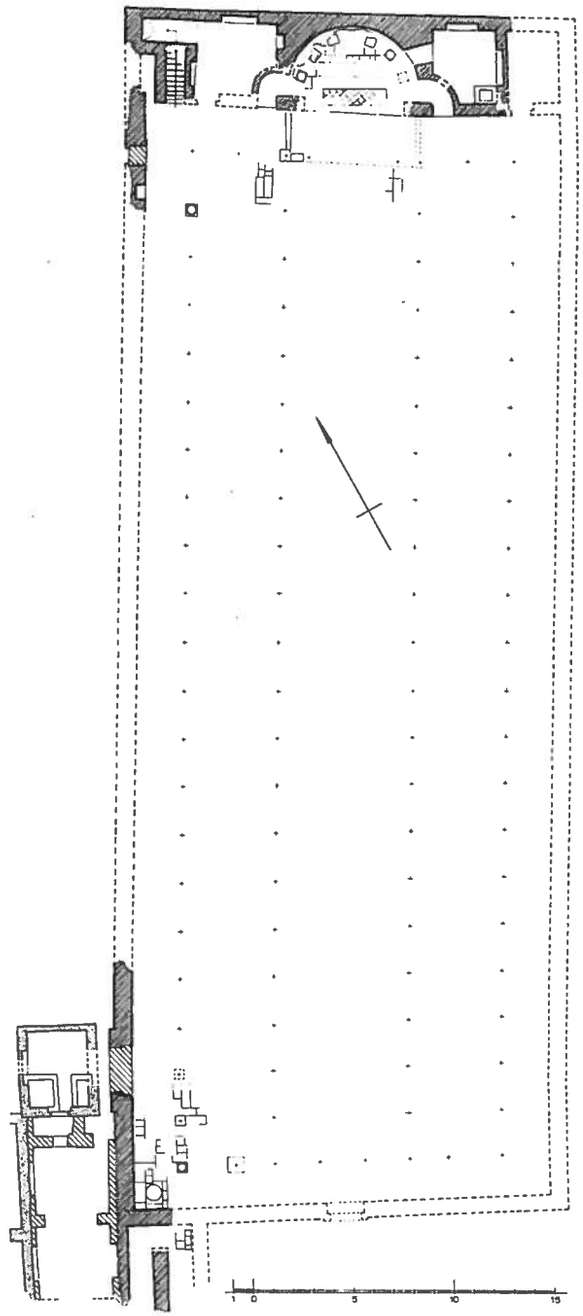

Figure 6.1 Church of Antinoopolis South (plan: P. Grossmann).

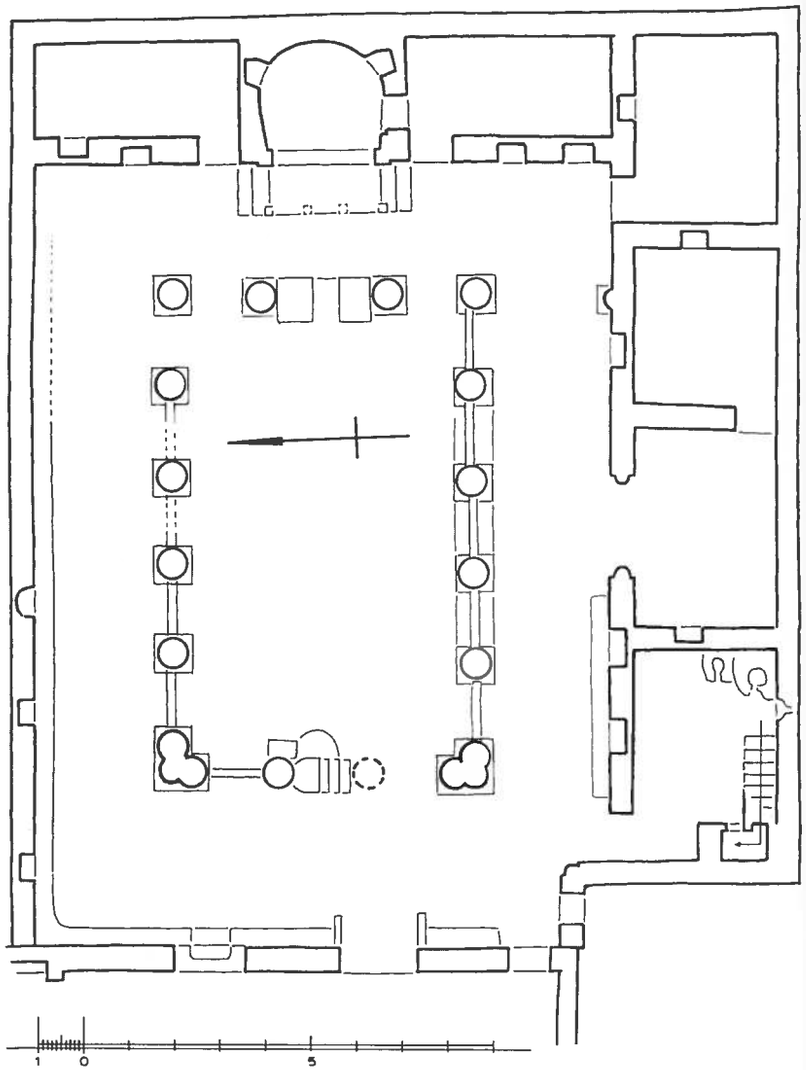

Figure 6.2 South-east church of Kellis (Dakhla Oasis) (plan: P. Grossmann).

west end of the church, the transverse passage (not to be confused with the narthex mentioned above) is part of the area occupied by the laity, whereas the eastern transverse passage was usually incorporated into the sanctuary, by being separated from the rest of the nave with screens (*cancelli*). In some larger, five-aisled basilicas of early date this central space was itself subdivided into three aisles. The reason for this was mainly structural. In the early period churches were usually covered by a flat roof constructed of wooden beams, which were rarely long enough to span the entire width of the building. This rather primitive form of roof construction was later abandoned in favour of a more complex system of triangular trusses which enabled timbers of the same length to span wide spaces. It seems that the recently excavated south-east church at Kellis in the Dakhla Oasis (**Fig.** 6.2)[3] is one of the earliest examples in which a flat roof was replaced by a saddleback roof.

Churches of this kind seem to be the basic type of church structure in Upper Egypt, where they are traceable until the seventh century. In monastic communities they may have survived even longer. Some more ambitious church buildings show that the central intercolumniation of the eastern colonnade was widened and emphasized with a higher central arch, which, because of its position, may be called the 'primary triumphal arch'. The oldest known example of this kind is in the church of the Monastery of St Bishuy at Sohag (**Fig.** 6.3),[4] but it may be assumed that the same feature would also have occurred in some urban churches, although none have apparently survived from that period. The only urban church of this kind so far identified is in front of the Luxor Temple,[5] dating to the end of the sixth century (**Fig.** 6.4).

In contrast to these Upper Egyptian examples, the known churches from Northern Egypt do not exhibit the same features. In a very small number of churches from the North there is a western return aisle, indicating that the idea of the ambulatory of the Thebaic churches was not completely unknown in that region. Of particular note in this regard is the pair of small churches on both sides of the large basilica of St Epimachos at Tell al-Makhzan, on the east side of Pelusium[6] (**Fig.** 6.5), where the large main basilica does not have a western return aisle.

The chief example of this class of church architecture with a western return aisle in Northern Egypt is the North Basilica at Abu Mina

[3] Hope and Bowen 1997: 49–64, esp. 49ff. pl. 4.
[4] Grossmann 2002a: 536–9 fig. 155.
[5] Grossmann 2002b: 17–39, esp. 19–27 fig. 1.
[6] Bonnet and Abd el-Samie 2003: 75–88, esp. 76–84 ills. 2–3; on the northern church cf. al-Taher et al. 2004: 89–94 fig. 2.

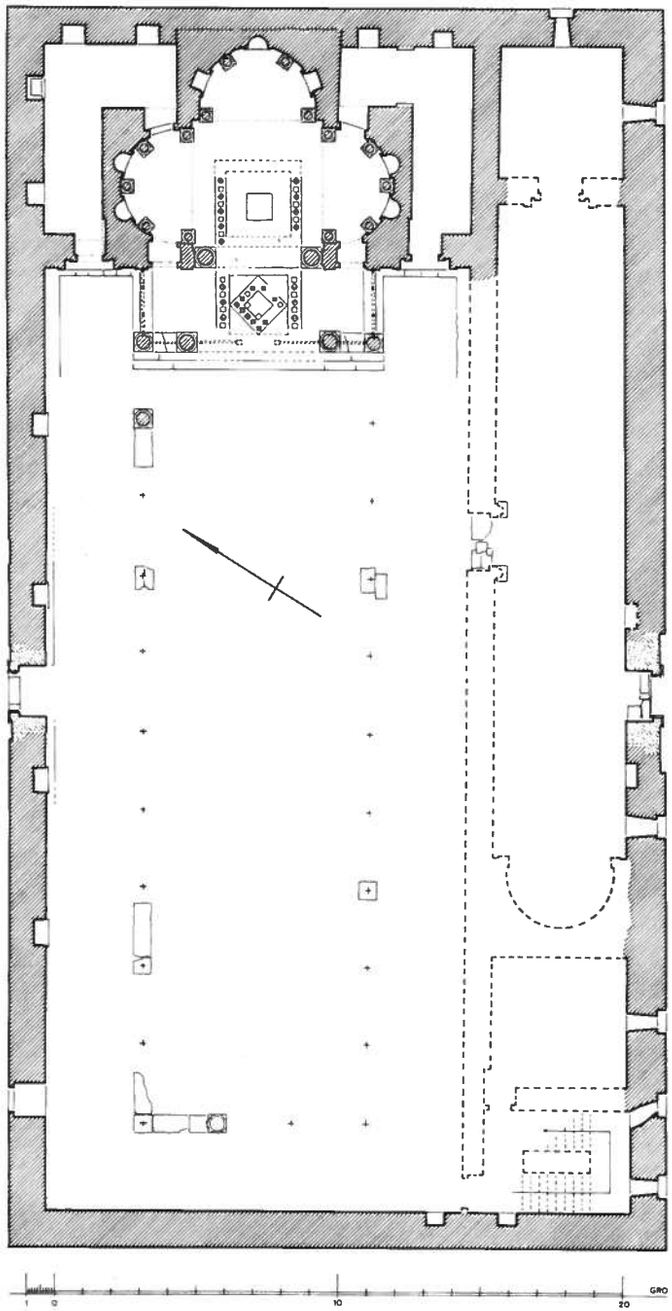

Figure 6.3 Sohag, church of Anba Bishuy (plan: P. Grossmann).

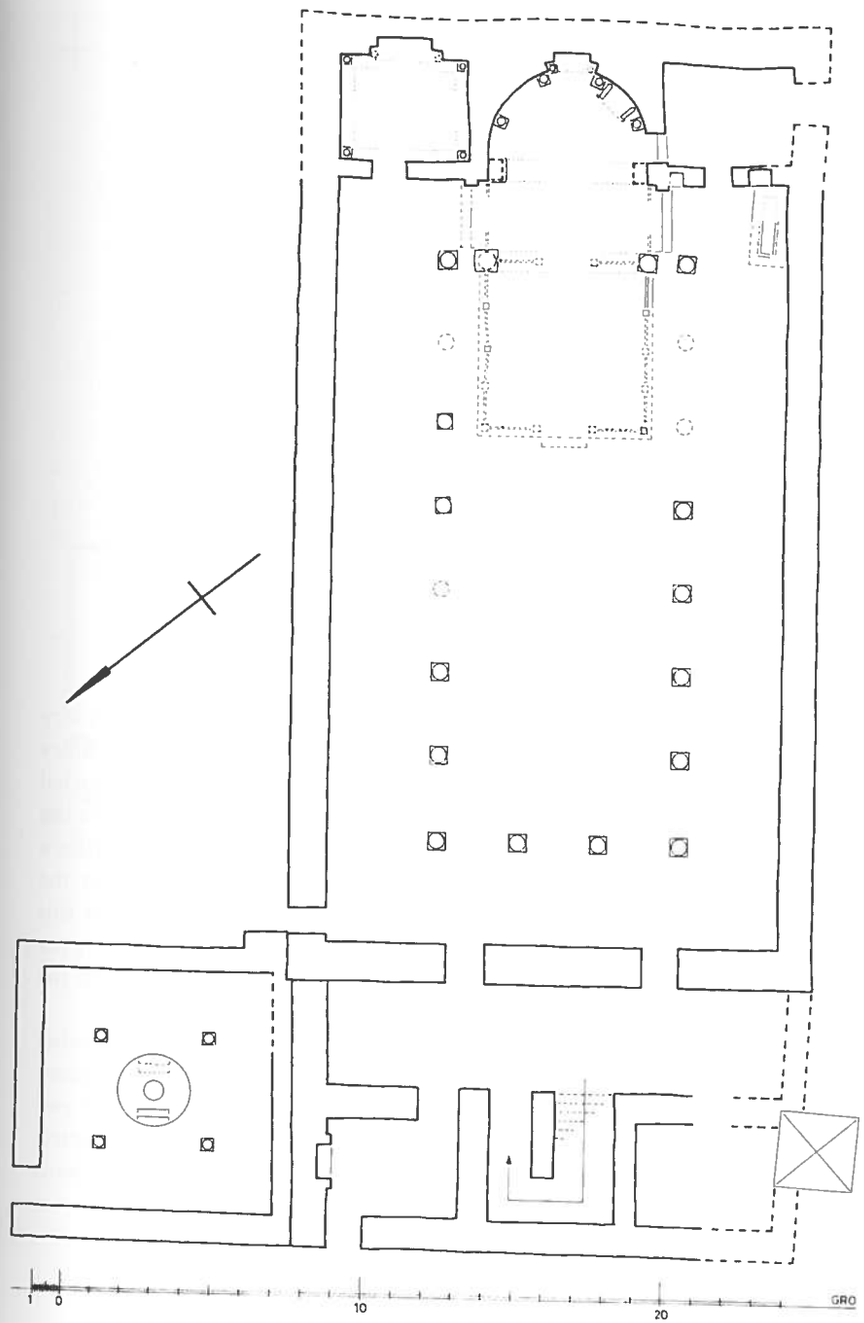

Figure 6.4 Luxor, church in front of the Pylon of the temple of Ammon (plan: P. Grossmann).

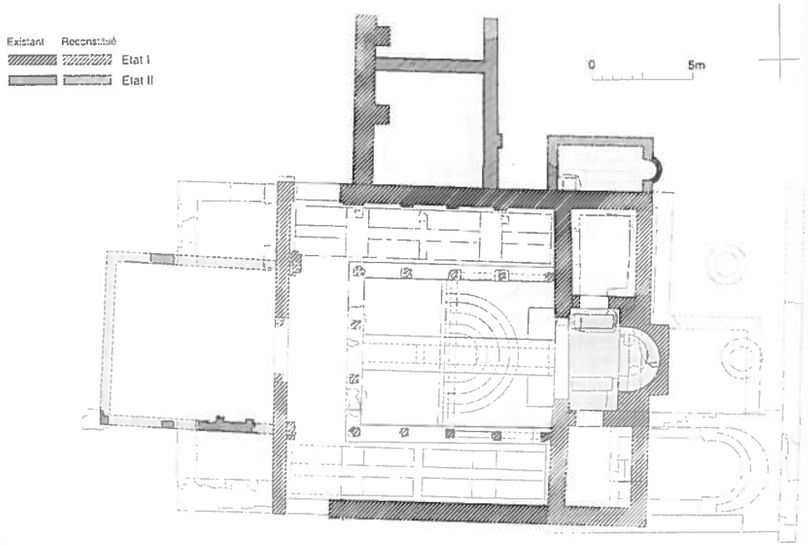

Figure 6.5 Pelusium, church of Tell al-Makhzan south (plan: C. Bonnet).

(**Fig.** 6.6).[7] It is a modestly decorated building, yet architecturally it is very handsome and regular. It dates to about the middle of the sixth century and was probably designed and built by an architect of the patriarchal court of Alexandria. Since the pilgrimage centre of Abu Mina was in the hands of the Chalcedonians at this time, the position of this northern church outside the town walls suggests that it was probably used by the monophysite patriarchate. It is also not unreasonable to assume that this church took an architectural form reminiscent of the contemporary Upper Egyptian style because most of the monophysite believers were from the southern part of the country.

The majority of churches in Northern Egypt are designed as in other parts of the empire, as Ward-Perkins has pointed out, 'with two (occasionally four) longitudinal colonnades, clerestory lighting, and, at the far end of the central nave, an apse'.[8] The return aisle in the west, so characteristic of Upper Egyptian churches, is usually missing, as is also the eastern

[7] Grossmann 2002a: 409–12 fig. 22. [8] Ward-Perkins 1954: 447–68, esp. 456.

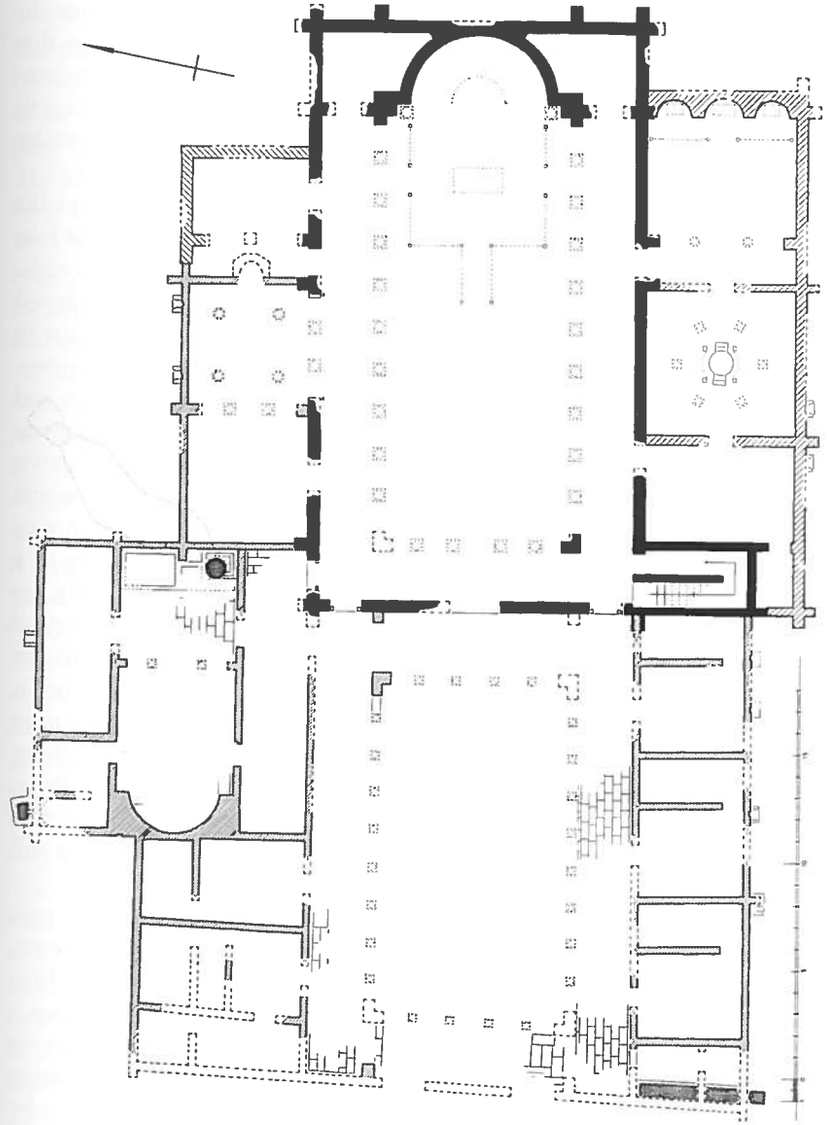

Figure 6.6 Abu Mina, North Basilica (plan: P. Grossmann).

transverse aisle, which is so far nowhere attested in the North. Notwithstanding, the largest churches in the Near East are to be found in Egypt, due in part to the large population. The only other sites in the region with comparably great churches are Heliopolis/Baalbek in Lebanon and Carthage in North Africa. Only in Rome are there churches with considerably wider naves.

In order to evaluate the significance of these observations within the general development of architecture in the empire as a whole, one must take a brief look at the origins of Christian church architecture on a broader scale. It is now almost universally accepted that the Christian basilica developed from the Roman *basilica forensis*.[9] This was a type of building familiar to everyone in the empire. In the early fourth century, imperial patronage and the increasing number of believers made it necessary to design and implement public assembly halls on a grander scale. The *basilica forensis* already had a history of almost five centuries since its first appearance in Rome and there were undoubtedly many examples in Egypt which had been in use since the early days of the Roman period, although they rarely survive in the archaeological record. Only a single example of a Roman market basilica is so far known, discovered a couple of years ago at Syene/Aswan.[10] Since the *basilica forensis* usually had an ambulatory all around the interior, it seems that the Upper Egyptian church adopted this form directly, in contrast to the northern churches where this feature is generally missing. Alternatively, the ambulatory may have been present in earlier churches in the North, which do not survive, and is known from the South because it may have continued in use for much longer there. At this point a comparison with the rest of the empire is difficult, because the evidence is such that we do not know whether churches with a full ambulatory were built in other provinces.

Some light may be shed on this question by considering the possible general appearance of pre-Constantinian churches. A single example is known, dating from the third century, at Dura Europos in Syria. This seems to have been indistinguishable in design from the neighbouring private houses.[11] It seems doubtful, however, whether this is a typical example of what we should imagine a church to have looked like during the pre-Constantinian period. Dura was only a small town, whereas in the larger cities, at least by the end of the third century, one might have expected to find a number of larger churches. The fact that the word 'church' (Greek *ekklesia*) was already

[9] Ward-Perkins 1954, as well as Deichmann 1982: 35–46, esp. 40–6.
[10] Jaritz 1998: 155–69 fig. 1. [11] Gerkan 1959: 226–32 fig. 1; Krautheimer 1965: 6f. fig. 1.

a well-attested expression for designating a Christian place of worship at this time indicates, at least in my opinion, that this type of building had become a significant feature of the contemporary townscape. The structure of an *ecclesia* might have been of a fairly low architectural standard and poor in decoration, yet significantly different from the other buildings. The church of Nicomedia, destroyed by Diocletian in 303, cannot have been a simple inconsequential house. It stood, according to Lactantius (*De mort.* 12.5) in a prominent position in the town and was visible from the imperial palace, although it was also surrounded by tall buildings. It was for this reason that Diocletian forbade its destruction by fire in case the conflagration should spread to adjacent structures.

The earliest known true church in Alexandria, as recorded by Abu 'l-Makarim in the thirteenth century, dates from the reign of the emperor Aurelian (270–5). It was built by Theonas,[12] who, about ten years later in 282, became bishop of the city. Eusebius, it is true, records in his *Ecclesiastical History* (7.6) that the majority of churches were small, implying that there were also a few somewhat larger churches. Furthermore, he also remarks that during the peaceful decades between the reign of Gallienus (253–68) and the Great Persecution of Diocletian (from 303) smaller churches were replaced by 'completely new and spacious churches'. It is possible that these new churches were being constructed with several aisles. Such a development would explain why, immediately following the 'Peace of the Church' under Constantine, all newly erected churches were built to much the same plan as three-aisled basilicas almost everywhere in the empire. Exceptions occur only in the remotest areas, for example in Noricum and Lower Pannonia, which were less 'Romanized', and where the church sanctuaries consist only of a semi-circular bench close to the east end of the building.[13] In other words, when the edict of Galerius of 30 April 311 created an empire-wide toleration of the Christian religion, and when Constantine turned to Christianity only a few years later, churches were needed everywhere, and since there was already a clearly defined format it was not necessary to create a new design. No discussion was required about how a church should be laid out and equipped as the architectural type already existed, albeit smaller in size and possibly simpler in execution, but essentially complete.[14] Thus in the letter written by Constantine to Makarios, bishop of Jerusalem, concerning the architectural design of the 'Church of the Holy Sepulchre'

[12] According to Abu 'l-Makârim, *History of the churches and monasteries in Lower Egypt in the 13th cent.* (transl. Samuel, Cairo 1992) 213–14.
[13] Egger 1916: 110–32 figs. 8, 31, 69, 77, 78, 99, 100, 104, 105. [14] Deichmann 1983: 82.

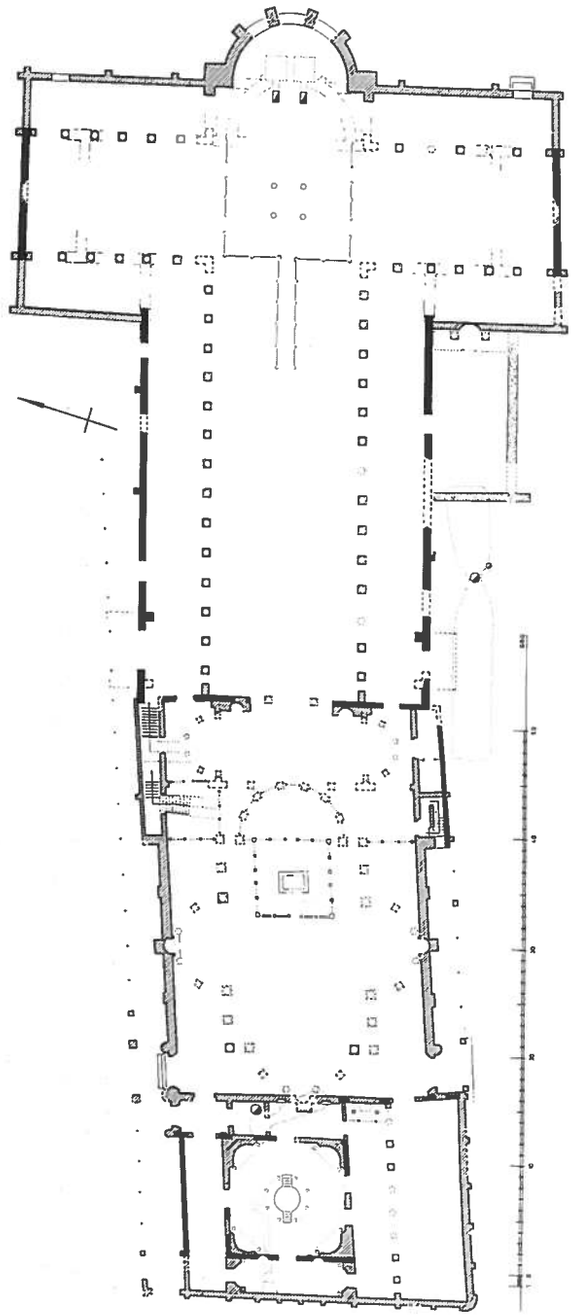

Figure 6.7 Abu Mina, Great Basilica (plan: P. Grossmann).

(Eusebius, *V. Const.* 3.31), the emperor uses the word *basilica* without any apparent need to explain its meaning or appropriateness.

The almost half century of peaceful existence enjoyed by the church between the reign of Gallienus and the persecution of 303 saw the reinstatement of church property that had been confiscated during the persecution of the reign of Valerian (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.13). During this period Christian communities probably worshipped in churches which took their form from the *basilica forensis* with slight variations in different provinces according to local traditions. Since we may assume that all the basilicas in larger settlements were designed with an ambulatory, we may conclude that throughout Egypt, as in other parts of the empire, the builders of churches in both Upper and Lower Egypt adhered faithfully to the earlier architectural tradition. However, in Northern Egypt, because of its proximity to Alexandria and to the Mediterranean world, the idea of planning the nave of a church as an aisled nave with an encircling ambulatory was soon abandoned. The similar abandonment of the two transverse aisles in the rest of the empire had probably already occurred at a slightly earlier period. It may be significant that the same idea is also found in the large Constantinian 'funerary halls' (*coemeteria subteglata*) as R. Krautheimer calls them, in the outskirts of Rome.[15]

In Upper Egypt, the tendency to adhere more closely to existing building traditions can be seen throughout the late antique period. This habit contrasts strikingly with the situation in Northern Egypt, which was more open to influence and developments coming from elsewhere in the empire. Many of these had their origins in Constantinople. The reason for this openness is probably this region's proximity to Alexandria.

It is unfortunate that no significant church remains of the late antique period have yet been discovered and recorded in Alexandria. To obtain some idea of what may have once existed there, we must turn to nearby sites. The most important of these is the large pilgrimage centre at Abu Mina, where a number of huge ecclesiastical buildings are extant, on a scale unlike anything found elsewhere in Egypt. The 'Great Basilica' there,[16] datable to the end of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, is also the largest yet known in Egypt (**Fig.** 6.7), with a nave more than fourteen metres wide. It is also the largest surviving church in the whole of the Near East. It has a three-aisled transept, a feature found only occasionally in Asia Minor and

[15] Krautheimer 1965: 29–31; recently the type was rediscussed by Schumacher 1987: 132–86 and Lehmann 2004: 57–77.

[16] Formerly labelled 'Arcadius basilica' on the basis of a wrong interpretation of the sources; see Grossmann 2002a: 405–9 figs. 17 and 20.

Greece. In Egypt, however, three other examples are known. One is the transept basilica at Hermopolis Magna (al-Ashmunain)[17] with semicircular ends on both sides of the transept, a form which also occurs in the large transept church of Marea[18] in Northern Egypt. It seems that in general, the reason for choosing this type of church building was the desire or need to increase the space available for the congregation in the nave of the church. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that such large churches built in this way would also have been present in Alexandria.

The influences of the architecture of the Mediterranean world, or even of Constantinople, can be felt even more strongly in the sixth century. Again, no examples survive from Alexandria, but at Abu Mina there are two examples of a tetraconch type of church building (**Figs.** 6.8–9). This is an ambitious building type very characteristic of the Eastern Roman empire at this time. The majority of examples are to be found in Syria,[19] while others occur in some of the capitals of Asia Minor and three more in the Balkans, including Athens, and one in Milan. In Upper Egypt one example, although heavily modified, is still recognizable at al-Haiz (Baharia Oasis).[20]

A somewhat different kind of building was discovered as part of the larger church complex in the north-western part of Pelusium (**Fig.** 6.10). It is a perfectly circular, double-shelled building with an inner circle of columns, probably interrupted at intervals by pillars.[21] The columns were fitted with a complete set of Theodosian fine-toothed composite capitals of Proconnesian marble which must have been imported directly from Constantinople.

The sixth-century baptistery at Abu Mina was designed as an octagon with niches on the diagonal axis (**Fig.** 6.11),[22] a model which had its origin in Roman funerary architecture and which can be traced back to the high imperial period. In addition, we know from the sources (Sophronius, *Mir.* 70) that the Church of the Evangelists, built at the end of the fourth century under the patriarch Theophilus (386–412) near the small town of Menouthis to the east of Alexandria, was in the form of a double-shelled octagon[23].

Other spatial arrangements in the late antique architecture of Egypt, which were also adopted from the early imperial architecture of Rome, are

[17] Wace, Megaw, and Skeat 1959: 17–81 pls. 2–9; Grossmann 2002a: 441–3 fig. 59.
[18] Grossmann 1993: 107–21; 2002a: 393–4 fig. 9. [19] Grossmann 1983: 167–73.
[20] Grossmann 2002a: 466f. fig. 83; recent excavations in the church led to collapse of the central part of the south side, cf. Hawass 2000: 151–3, with photo on 152.
[21] Grossmann 2002a: 470–1 fig. 88; and (forthcoming).
[22] Grossmann 2003a. [23] See also Gascou 1998: 34.

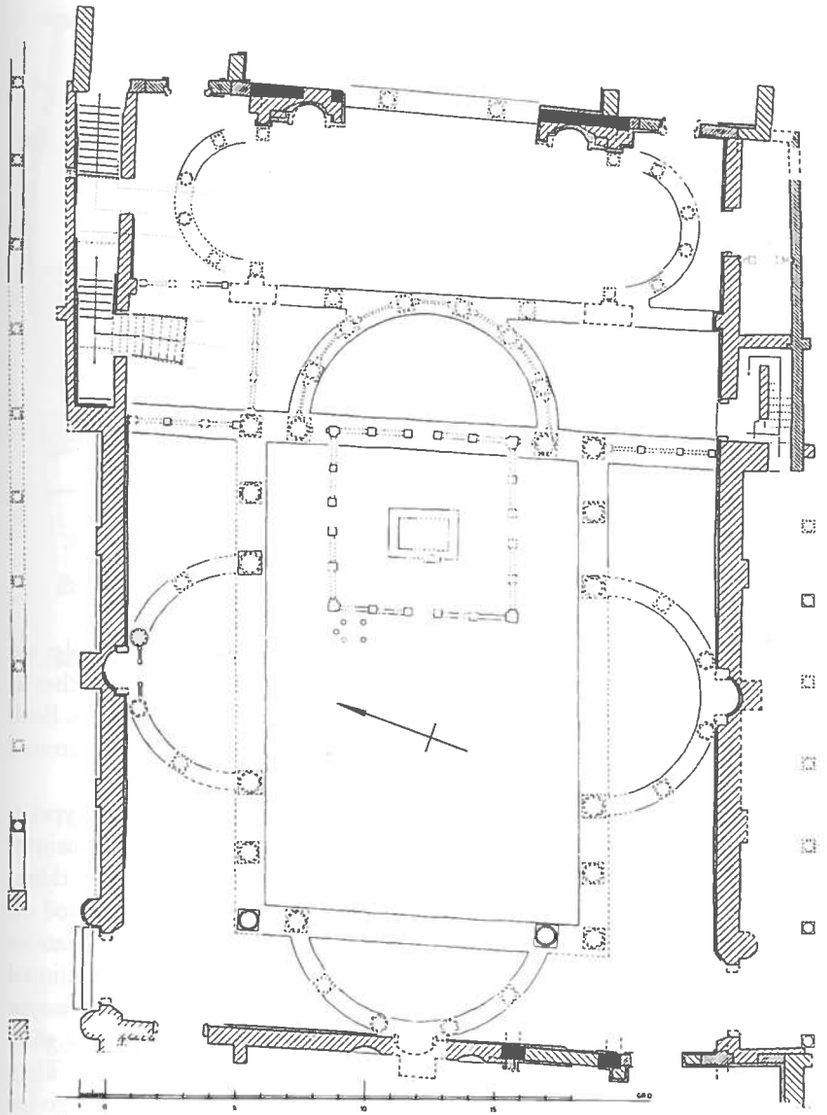

Figure 6.8 Abu Mina, Martyr Church (plan: P. Grossmann).

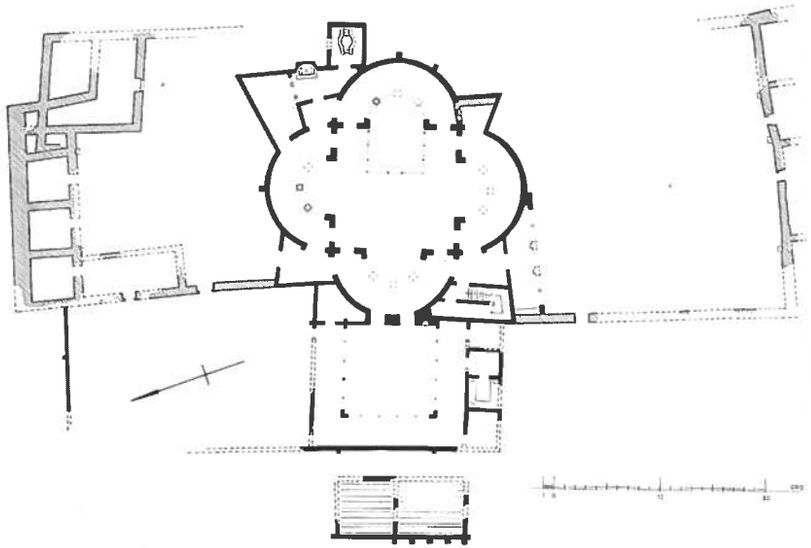

Figure 6.9 Abu Mina, Eastern Church (plan: P. Grossmann).

the triapsidal rooms, the so called *triconchoi*, of which several examples are preserved in Upper Egypt, and oblong units with semicircular conches at both smaller ends, which also served as the model for church narthexes. Both these types are found in Egypt even before late antiquity, as demonstrated by the layout of several Roman bath buildings.

The most characteristic example of East Roman influence on Egyptian church architecture is the newly discovered cruciform church at Pelusium, which is not yet published.[24] The cross is laid out in the form of three- and five-aisled arms, three-aisled on the east–west axis and five-aisled on the north–south axis. The larger, central naves of both axes terminate in conches, of which those on the north, south, and west have an additional inner circuit of columns. Only the eastern conch, which served as the apse for the sanctuary of the church, is separate and is slightly narrower than the other three. Unfortunately, all the main supports have been lost. They were undoubtedly of stone and were almost certainly removed long ago for reuse elsewhere by stone-robbers. The centre may have been covered by a dome, although this remains conjectural and depends on whether or not sufficiently supportive foundations will be discovered. The inspiration for

[24] Excavations of the Supreme Council of Antiquities under the direction of Muhammad Abd al-Maqsud and Ahmad al-Tab'ai.

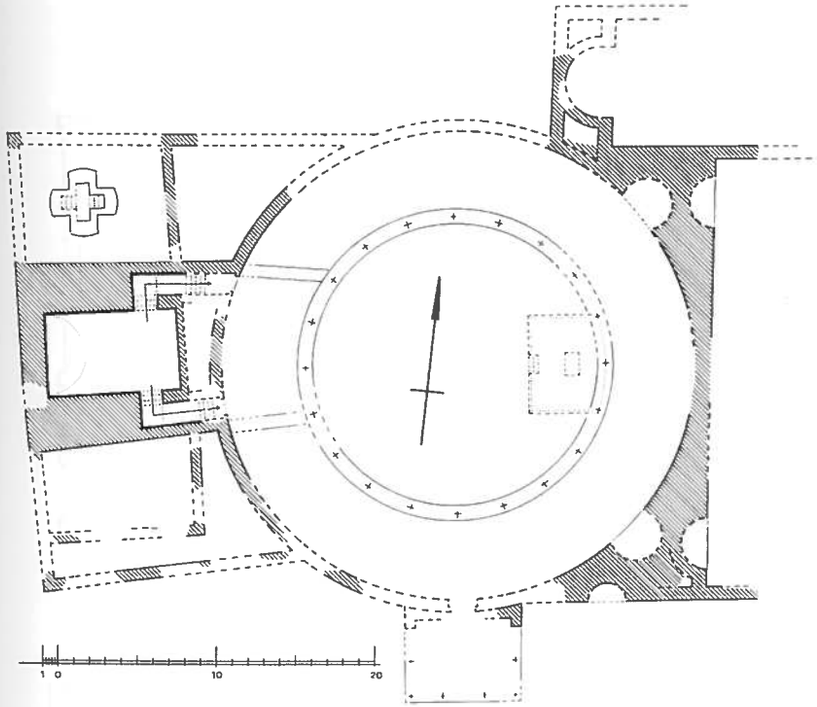

Figure 6.10 Pelusium, circular church (plan: P. Grossmann).

this church was doubtless the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, founded by Constantine and rebuilt under Justinian, which survives only in the descriptions of Byzantine authors.[25]

Further strong influences from the capital of the empire are equally observable in the decorative schemes and tectonic details of churches. The regular interchange of rectangular and semicircular wall niches, such as those of the great monastic church of Shenoute at Sohag in Upper Egypt[26] (**Fig.** 6.12) or those in the sanctuary of the smaller copy at the Monastery of Anba Bishuy (**Fig.** 6.3), only 8 km distant,[27] is typically Roman in style. The

[25] Strube 1973: 131–47 ills. 64–7 with reproductions of the various attempts at reconstruction of the church.

[26] On the dedicatory inscription of the comes Caesarius, cf. Lefebvre 1920: 251 with text and French translation. A facsimile is published by the same author in *Dictionnaire des antiquités chrétiennes et de la liturgie* IV (1920) 471 fig. 3648.

[27] Wrongly indicated in the map of the Survey of Egypt, sheet 40/66 in 1:100,000 (1925) as 'Amba Bishâi Monastery'; the monastery with this name lies 3 km further to the north-west at Nag' el-Deir.

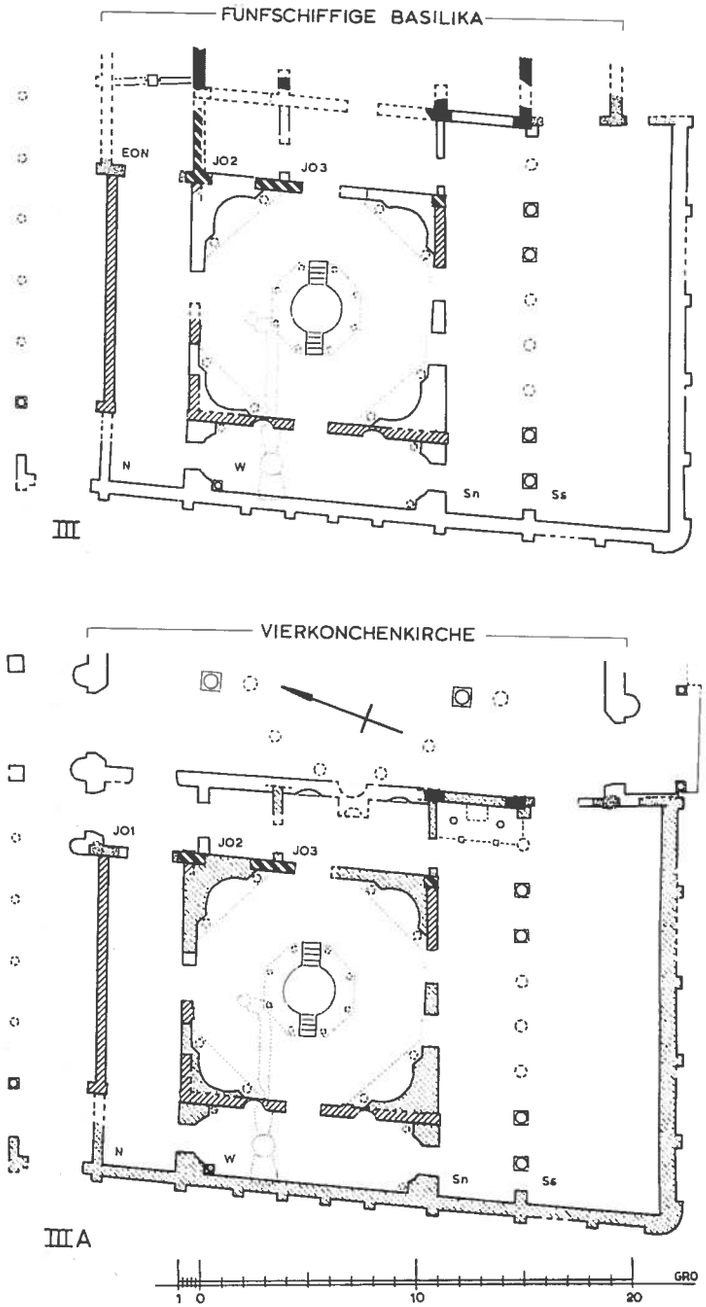

Figure 6.11 Abu Mina, Baptistery III (plan: P. Grossmann).

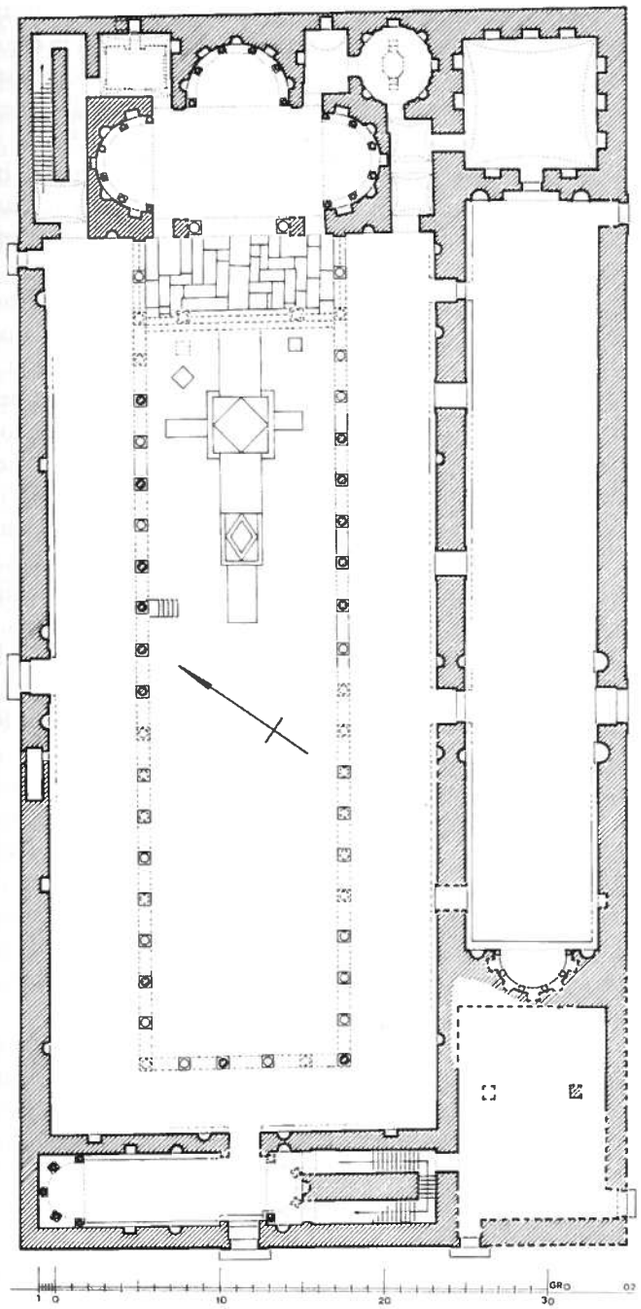

Figure 6.12 Sohag, church of the monastery of Anba Shenoute (plan: P. Grossmann).

same is true for the columns applied against the wall surfaces in the triconch sanctuaries of both these churches and in the lateral conches in the narthex of the Shenoute church. Columns also occur in this position in the so-called 'Memorial Church' (upper church) of Dayr Abu Fana[28] and in the eastern conch of the triconch church at Tentyra, modern Dendera.[29]

The different elements comprising the columns in late antique building in Egypt followed Roman, specifically Eastern Roman, models. Bases used the taller, late Roman, pedestal which was composed of a decorated square or octagonal shaft with an attic base above. They were produced mainly in Alexandrian workshops from Proconnesian marble imported from Constantinople. Local imitations in hard Egyptian nummulitic limestone were also made at Alexandria, and others in granite were produced at Aswan. The column shafts were usually monolithic pieces of imported marble or granite. Only when these materials were unavailable, as at remote sites, were locally produced limestone or sandstone shafts used, and these were usually in the form of drums due to the softness of the material.

Column capitals exhibit a rich variety of shapes, developed out of the Corinthian order (rarely Ionic) as found throughout the Eastern Roman empire. (Pharaonic capitals were not reused in late Roman buildings.) Innovations first created in Constantinople emerge a few years later as local imitations in Egypt. This is especially true of the so called 'wind-blown' and 'butterfly' capitals from the end of the fifth century and the various types of impost capitals that were developed in Eastern Rome in the early decades of the sixth century. The Egyptian imitations of these types are easily recognizable, and examples with *à jour* work, such as are usually found in Constantinopolitan impost capitals from the fifth century onwards, almost never occur in Egypt.[30] This is partly due to the bad quality of the local Egyptian limestone, which does not allow any undercarving of the surface foliage on the capitals, as was the usual practice in the marble workshops of Constantinople. It seems, however, that the local craftsmen were unfamiliar with the technique because even when they were able to work with marble they did not produce real *à jour* work.

Not all innovations of the Constantinopolitan workshops were imitated in Egypt, however, and some types continued to be produced in Egypt longer than in the capital of the empire. There were also a number of simplified productions which were idiosyncratically Egyptian, not found elsewhere, and these included some bizarre deviations from the classical Corinthian model.

[28] Grossmann 2002a: 518–20 fig. 136. [29] Grossmann 2002a: 443–6 fig. 63. [30] Pensabene 1993.

A significant difference can also be traced between the various treatments given to wall surfaces of buildings in Lower Egypt and Northern Egypt. In the late fifth century in the Eastern Roman empire, the tradition began to construct arches without archivolts and soffits but finished instead with smooth plaster or mosaic surfaces.[31] This development probably coincided with the introduction of brickwork in the construction of all arches and the extensive use of brick to replace ashlar masonry. At Abu Mina this trend was followed in the structures of the fifth and sixth centuries, although a pseudo-ashlar method was used in the buildings at this site. In Upper Egypt, however, the earlier tradition of ashlar building remained in use until the end of the sixth century, when the church in front of the Luxor Temple was built in this style. Many decorated sandstone arch blocks were found in the debris of this church,[32] while, in contrast, such pieces were almost completely missing at Abu Mina.

Military architecture in Egypt also follows imperial styles and traditions. The fortresses of the Diocletianic period with projecting U-shaped towers such as those at Babylon/Old Cairo,[33] Dionysias/Qasr Qarun in the Fayyum,[34] Naga' al-Haggar[35] (probably to be identified as the ancient fortress of Praesentia and thus presumably Diocletian's residence), to mention only the most important, could have equally well been built on the *strata Diocletiana* in Syria and Palestine or in the Danubian region. The same goes for the *tetrapyrgos* of Eileithyiaspolis[36] (**Fig.** 6.13) which stands partly on the southern enclosure wall of the temple of al-Kab, and which the excavators mistook for a monastery. The outwardly projecting U-shaped towers along the walls, and square or circular corner towers, belong to a development which can be traced to the end of the third century. It replaced the earlier fortresses which had rounded corners and inwardly projecting corner towers. The only example of this kind yet identified in Egypt is the fortress at al-Burdan, roughly half way between Alexandria and Paraetonium/Marsa Matruh on the Mediterranean coast, probably a first-century structure.[37] More unusual, however, are a number of so-called 'watch towers' manned by smaller military units such as those at al-Gib in Kharga Oasis[38] and at Dahab on the east coast of the Sinai peninsula.[39] These towers often have strongly supported and reinforced corners, possibly

[31] See already Deichmann 1956: 32ff. [32] Grossmann 2002a: 24–6 figs. 5–16.
[33] Grossmann 1998a: 173–207. [34] Schwartz 1969: 1–26 fig. 48b.
[35] Abdal-Wareth et al. 1992: plan 22. [36] Grossmann 2003a: fig. 19.
[37] Grossmann 1997, with date according to a suggestion by M. Mackensen based on new pottery finds at the site.
[38] Reddé 1999: 378 fig. 2; Ikram et al. 2004: fig. 3. [39] Umran et al. (forthcoming).

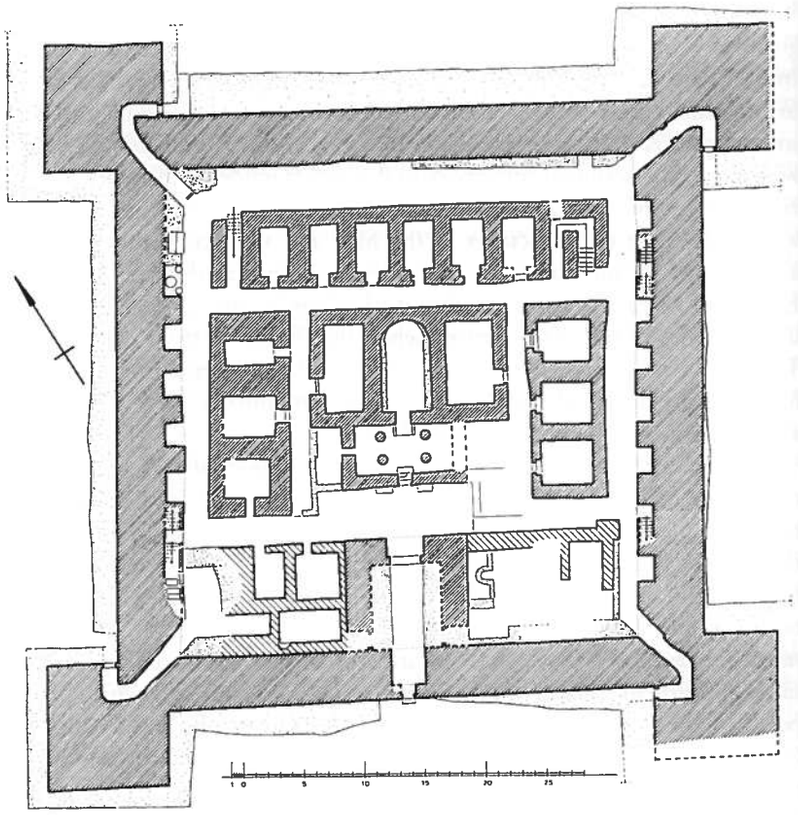

Figure 6.13 Quadriburgus from al-Kab (plan: P. Grossmann).

because they are in a tradition based on building in sun-dried mudbrick,[40] but a further important example at Abu Rawash is now too damaged to show how it was originally constructed.[41]

The same can also be said for fortresses of later centuries. The sixth-century fortress at Raithou/al-Tur, Sinai built during the reign of Justinian[42] (**Fig.** 6.14) is almost a brother of the Justinianic fortress at Thamugadi/Timgad in North Africa,[43] even to the arrangement of the

[40] The surviving remains of the tower of Dahab are of local rubble bound with lime mortar, but this might be valid only for the socket of the tower, while the upper part of bricks is gone.
[41] Jones 1996. See especially the concluding remarks starting at the end of p. 259.
[42] Kawatoko 1995: 27; Grossmann 2002a: 358–61 fig. 188. [43] Lassus 1981.

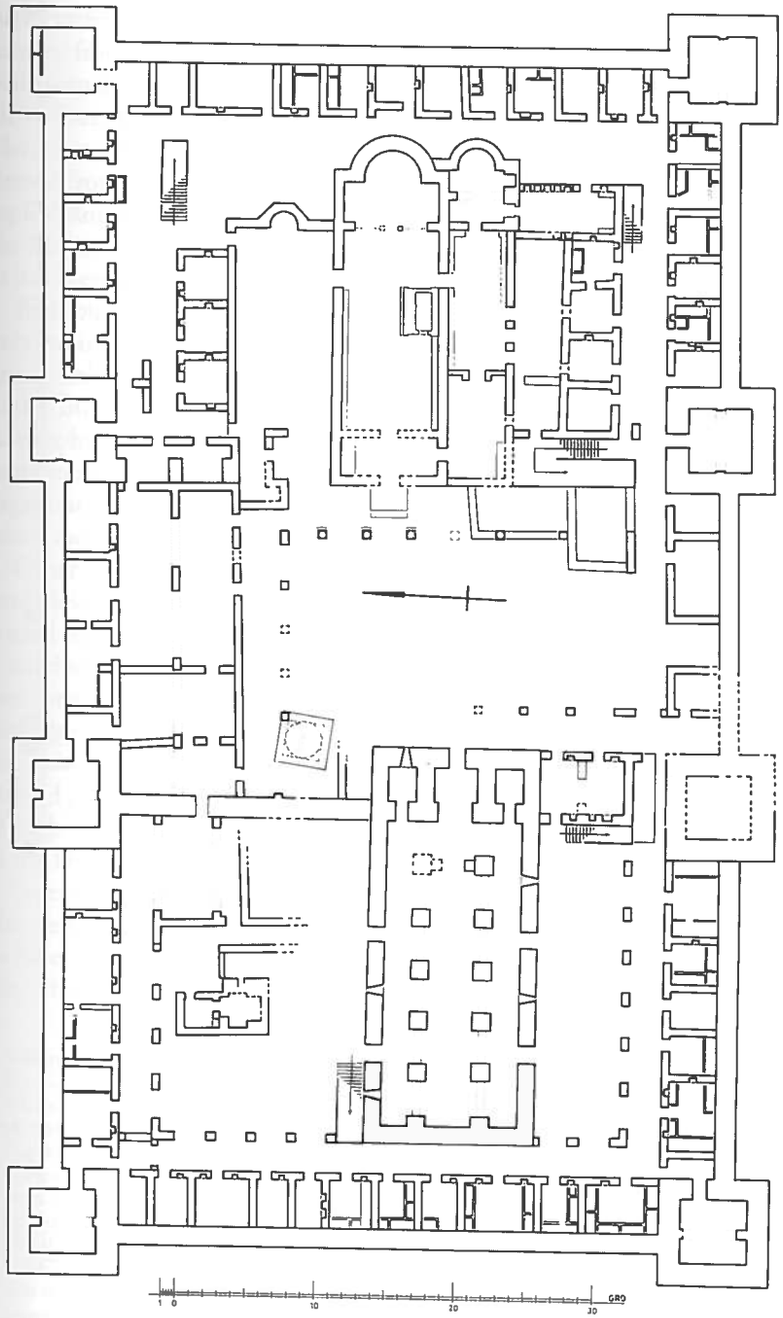

Figure 6.14 Fortress of Raithou (south Sinai) (plan: P. Grossmann).

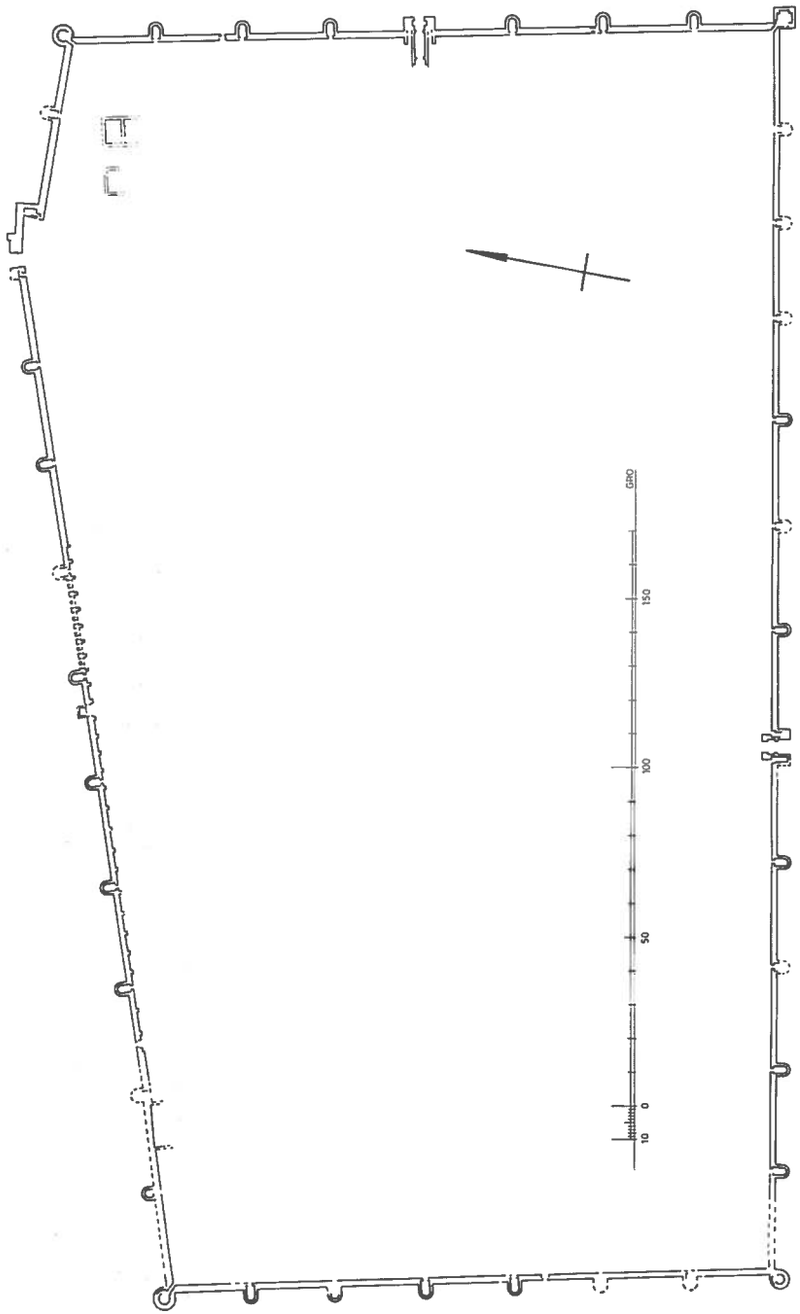

Figure 6.15 Fortress of Tall al-Farama (north-west Pelusium) (plan: P. Grossmann).

barracks for the soldiers. Both fortresses also feature churches, as was customary from the reign of Theodosius I onwards. Other examples are the Nabatean fortresses at Avdat/Oboda and Nessana in the Negev or Palaestina III.[44] A very late example is that at Pelusium (**Fig.** 6.15), probably built under Heraclius after his defeat of the Persians in 628 and the subsequent withdrawal from Roman territory of Persian military units in 629. It is still a typical Roman–Byzantine *castrum*. It should be pointed out, however, that the Monastery of St Catherine at Mt Sinai is not a military establishment as has been stated by some scholars,[45] but a fortified monastery.[46]

Bath buildings are another important class of public architecture. The only extant example in Egypt constructed to an imperial standard is the great public bath at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria,[47] built in the second half of the fourth century, which may even have been an imperial foundation.[48] Almost half of the complex of heated rooms survives, together with a similarly substantial portion of the underground service system. The interior organization follows the classical Roman models except in having a wet steam *sudatorium* as preferred by the Greeks.

Other bath houses in Egypt are generally small and of a provincial standard. Several examples of double baths are known from the Mediterranean coastal region at Marea,[49] Abu Mina,[50] and Paraetonium.[51] They comprise a relatively large *apodyterium* accompanied by several small side chambers intended for various purposes, while the section containing the actual bathing rooms displays a rather reduced programme with two *tepidaria* and one *caldarium*. The heating system operated as usual by means of underground *praefurnia* with floors supported on hypocausts. Further examples of bath houses are known from Pelusium (unpublished) and several sites in the Delta.

Several excavated sites have revealed private bath houses. Published examples are known from Abu Mina[52] and Karanis/Fayyum.[53] Their usual layout includes a small entrance chamber and a bathroom with a separate bath tub, which probably replaced the *caldarium* in the public baths.[54]

[44] See Gregory 1995–7: II.433–41 figs. F48.1a, F49.1a–b.
[45] E.g. G. Forsyth 1991, esp. 1682. [46] Grossmann 1988. [47] Kołątaj 1992.
[48] A large bath building probably from the time of Hadrian is also extant in Antinoopolis, cf. Jomard 1821: 253–5 pl. 61 fig. 22, but no excavations have taken place so far.
[49] El-Fakharani 1983: 180 fig. 2; mentioned also by Kołątaj 1992: 26 fig. 21A, with an updated plan.
[50] Müller-Wiener et al. 1966: 173–89 figs. 2–3.
[51] Bates 1927: 177–88, but wrongly understood as a church; recently repeated by Harrison 2003: 437–9 fig. 373; see also Goodchild 1991.
[52] Abd'al-Aziz and Kościuk 1990: fig. 1.
[53] G. Castel in el-Nassery et al. 1976: 239–73 with several plans and photographs.
[54] Also the structure published as an *édifice sur la montagne* at Bawit by Clédat 1925, esp. 212f. fig. 1258, apparently contains a private bath on its south side, not described as such by Clédat.

The foregoing review of the numerous similarities between the architecture of public buildings in Egypt and the larger Mediterranean world demonstrates the Roman and Constantinopolitan sources of much of Egypt's architectural heritage at this time. It is now necessary to turn to the monastic architecture of Egypt, which differs strikingly from the styles and traditions which emerged in monasteries and monastic churches in the rest of the empire. Apart from a few rare exceptions, churches in Egypt were very simple and rather ill-proportioned structures. Despite many mentions of foreign monks present in Egyptian monasteries, it seems that it was in this sphere more than any other that Egyptian characteristics were dominant. The reason for this may be found in the strong asceticism of the Egyptian monks. (Cf. chapter 19 below for Pachomius' reaction to the beauty of the first church at Pbow.)

Byzantine monks were not ashamed to construct churches and chapels as beautifully as they could. The simple, often irregularly rock-cut, churches of the lavras in the valleys of Palestine are always decorated with fine mosaics.[55] In Syria and Asia Minor, monastic churches were frequently far more finely decorated than the corresponding buildings in the villages. The great church of Dayr Anba Shenouda near Sohag in Upper Egypt, for which a large team of professional builders would have been hired,[56] is an exception in Egypt, yet churches such as that at Dayr Turmanin in Northern Syria,[57] now unfortunately demolished, were normal elsewhere. The style of Byzantine monastic churches follows the same course of development as churches in normal towns and villages.

Domestic architecture, like monastic churches, also seems to differ, at least in part, from the Byzantine tradition, as far as one can gather from the limited surviving remains in Egypt. While the ambitious and lavish palaces of high officials at the Byzantine court show a rich conglomerate of curved, rounded, or cross-shaped chambers with ample semi-circular *exedrae* and niches,[58] the few known palaces or richer private houses in Egypt have a more formal, restrained ground plan which seems to follow an earlier tradition of domestic architecture. Several examples survive from the late antique period at the large pilgrimage centre of Abu Mina. The most

[55] Hirschfeld 1952.

[56] Amélineau 1895, *Fragments de la vie de Schenoudi* III, esp. 636–7; see also Wipszycka 1986: 125 (repr. in E. Wipszycka, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* (Rome 1996): 337–62, esp. 346 n. 18, with, however, inaccurate quotations of the texts).

[57] Butler 1969: 94ff. fig. 98.

[58] A characteristic example is the fifth-century palace of Antiochos in Constantinople, which was later turned into a church, cf. Naumann and Belting 1966: 13–23 fig. 1; Müller-Wiener 1977: 122f. fig. 109.

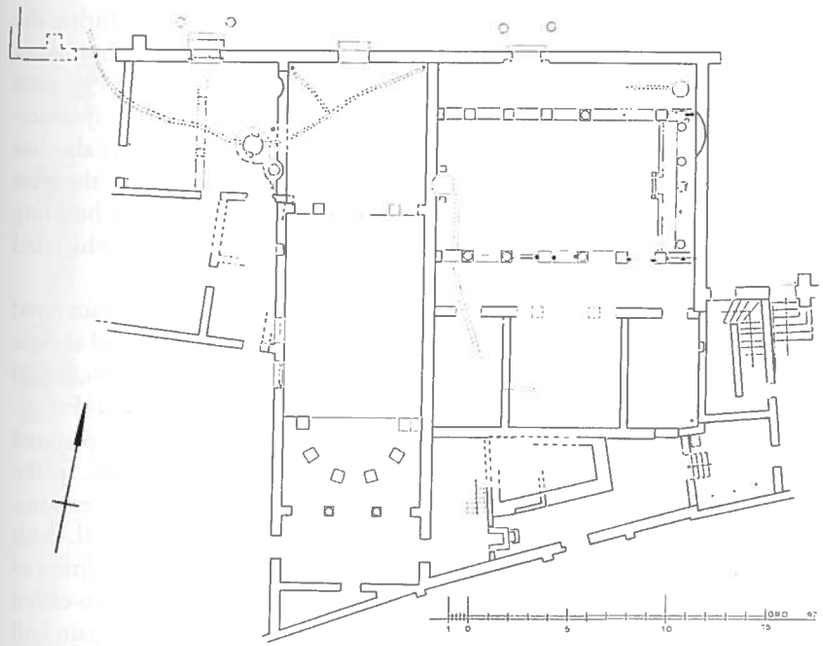

Figure 6.16 Palace on the southern side of the Great Basilica at Abu Mina (plan: P. Grossmann).

prominent is the palace entered directly from the south of the Great Basilica (**Fig.** 6.16), which was probably the residence of the *hegoumenos* of the centre.[59] It resembles the slightly simpler 'Ostraca House', located directly opposite the Double Bath at Abu Mina, which has a peristyle court with colonnades only along the two longer sides. On the south side of the peristyle of the *hegoumenos*' residence there is a typical and richly decorated reception hall which is entered from the portico through a *tribelon* and is flanked on both sides by secondary chambers. The west side of the building is occupied by a large *triclinium* divided into four sections and ending on the south in a colonnaded semicircular *exedra*. The peristyle of the 'Ostraca House' is entered directly from the street. The house also has a large reception room on the opposite, east, side, and several staircases indicate that it was at least two storeys high.

A seventh- or eighth-century house in the north-east corner of the central square of Abu Mina is of special interest. It was probably erected as

[59] Grossmann 1999: 69–73 fig. 2.

the residence of the *hegoumenos* after the destruction of the site during the course of the Persian invasion of 619 and the monophysite repopulation following the Arab conquest in 639–42. The ground plan follows an even earlier tradition, with a central atrium-like court and three rooms symmetrically arranged on the north side, of which the largest (no. 509) also has the typical form of a reception room. The main entrance lies on the west with a latrine beside it, while on the opposite east rear side of the building there is a secondary entrance and a separate entrance to the stairs which led to the first floor.[60]

Further examples are two seventh-century episcopal residences excavated near Helwan (to the south of Cairo) where the Arab governor Abd al-Aziz ibn Marwan (685–705), brother of the Khalif Mahmud ibn Marwan, began construction on a new capital to replace the unhealthy settlement of Fustat. Both residences were large complexes surrounded by differently planned sequences of rooms with churches and large triconch dining halls. In the slightly larger palace (A) the central square was divided into two sections, a public area with the church, and a private area with the dining hall. Both dining halls, with their triconch ground plans, stand fully in the tradition of late Roman palace architecture. Two well-known examples are the so-called 'Bishop's Palace' at Bosra, datable to the sixth century,[61] and the main hall in the palace of Qasr ibn Wardan[62] in Northern Syria, datable to the early part of the second half of the sixth century. According to F. de' Maffei, the latter probably belonged to the *stratelatês* Georgios, a high-ranking military commander and one of the immediate subordinates of the *magister militum per Orientem*.[63]

While all the above examples were the residences of upper-class people, the houses of the middle and lower classes, mostly located in the villages and smaller settlements of the countryside, were completely different. These were often cubic, tower-like structures of which examples are preserved in the remains of the Coptic town of Djeme, the former Kastron Memnonion (**Fig.** 6.17), both within and on the walls of the temple enclosure at Medinet Habu.[64] Such tower houses were already in use from the Ptolemaic period and they are known to have stood two, three, or even more storeys high,

[60] Arnold et al. 1997: 90–8 fig. 3; see also Grossmann 2002a: 369 fig. 31.
[61] Butler 1920: 286ff. fig. 248; Lavin 1962: 10 fig. 11.
[62] de' Maffei 1995 with a new description after the excavation and restoration of the building; on earlier descriptions, see Butler 1920: 34–40 fig. 32 pl. 4; on the arches and vaults, see Grossmann 2000 with a new plan fig. 1.
[63] de' Maffei 1995: 109ff.
[64] Hölscher 1954: 45–51 pls. 41–3; see also Arnold et al. 2003: 172–90 figs. 111–17.

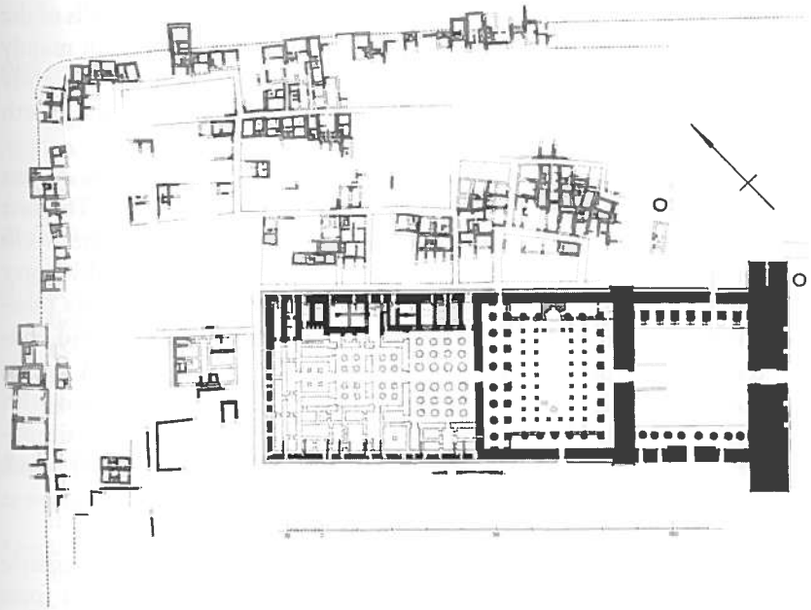

Figure 6.17 Houses of Djeme (ancient Memnonia) (plan: P. Grossmann, after Hölscher).

often with underground cellars. The outside door is usually very narrow and was usually positioned so that it did not afford a view directly into the interior of the house. Not all the houses were directly accessible from the streets. The interior arrangements of these buildings are organized vertically rather than horizontally, with the living accommodation on the upper floors, where the heavy smoke produced from cooking hearths would escape directly and cause the least disturbance. At ground level there was often an installation to house water jars, frequently in a niche,[65] so that drinking water would be available to passers-by or to offer to visitors, as is still customary in Egypt today.

A number of urban apartment blocks have been discovered in Egypt, of which the complex at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria is a good example.[66] It is a two- or three-storey building with a number of one- or two-room flats around a narrow central court and a stairway opposite the entrance on its east, narrow, side. Next to the stairs there is a common latrine. Access to

[65] Hölscher 1954: 46 fig. 54 pl. 43c. [66] Rodziewicz 1984: 66–234 pl. 111.

each of the flats was probably from balconies running along the walls of the court, as there are no inner porticos. Some apartment blocks with mainly two-room flats arranged in a similar way have been excavated recently at Abu Mina in the north-western region of the site beside the North Bath.[67]

The excavations at Abu Mina have also uncovered examples of rest houses for pilgrims and travellers. They are mainly of two types. The first type is represented by the so-called 'Great Xenodochium' on the north side of the central pilgrimage square, which was probably a multi-storey building most likely intended to accommodate upper-class visitors (*honestiores*). It was directly accessible from the large central square and consisted of an inner peristyle surrounded on all sides by equally sized rooms. Only on the north side of the peristyle was the building provided with a larger, three-aisled assembly hall. Although it is considerably simplified, this rest house follows the basic layout of the famous classical Greek guest houses such as the *Katagogeion* at Epidauros[68] and the *Leonideion* at Olympia.[69]

The second type of guest house at Abu Mina is the so-called 'Peristyle House',[70] which consisted of two large peristyles clearly separated from each other by a sequence of rooms accessible only from one side. No other rooms were present along the outer sides. Each had its entrance from the street and each was provided with its own set of latrines. In addition, the surrounding porticos of both peristyles were of an unusual width. The building apparently provided accommodation for the lower-class visitors (*humiliores*) who did not stay in separate rooms but occupied the porticos of the peristyles which were their only protection from the weather. The demarcation of the peristyles almost certainly reflects a separation by gender.

Further examples of pilgrim rest houses have been found beside the large church of St Epimachos at Tall al-Makhzan to the east of Pelusium. They consist of a sequence of small, equally sized rooms along the sides of a small courtyard on the north side of the church.[71] A later alteration at this site saw the porticos of the atrium of this church subdivided into a series of guest rooms.

[67] Grossmann and Pfeiffer 2003: 22–8 fig. 1. [68] Dinsmoor 1950: 251 fig. 201.
[69] Mallwitz 1972: 246ff. fig. 201; recently, however, the *Leonideion* has been interpreted not as a rest house, but as an *estiatorion* to feed a large number of guests, cf. Hoepfner 1996: 36ff. figs. 32, 35.
[70] Grossmann et al. 1998a: 43–5 fig. 1. [71] Al-Taher et al. 2003: fig. 1.

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CHAPTER 7

Coptic and Byzantine textiles found in Egypt: Corpora, collections, and scholarly perspectives

Thelma K. Thomas

About 125 years ago, explorers, entrepreneurs, and fellahin in Egypt began to unearth astonishing quantities of textiles, mainly from burials in cemeteries at monasteries and cities, as at Panopolis and Antinoopolis (**Figs.** 7.1–3). The discoveries were variously categorized as late antique and early Christian, late Roman and Byzantine, and Coptic, and to this day terminology remains at issue.[1] The early textile finds were chiefly items of clothing and, to a lesser extent, furnishings executed in a range of materials and techniques; however, it was the ornamental tapestries of wool, understood to be local products, and the rarer compound weaves of silk,[2] understood to be imports, that especially captured attention in popular and scholarly arenas. The first private and museum collections, and collections associated with the textile industry, typically acquired these textile artefacts with little or no information about their archaeological contexts and in fragmentary condition (**Fig.** 7.4).[3] In 1971 one scholar estimated that there were 150,000 such textiles in collections worldwide.[4] By then the collection

[1] E.g., Schrenk 2004: 15–16; English translation, 455–6.
[2] In tapestry (e.g., Figs. 7.4 and 5b), the weaver's hand carries the weft across the warp to 'draw' individual motifs row by weft row, following a horizontal course creating a band or bands of colour or a more eccentric course of a shapelier, more complex motif. In tapestry, the weft is usually packed so densely as to hide the warp, and this weft-faced weave is often combined with supplementary weft-wrapping, a technique that picks out small details and outlines on the front of the cloth. Most of the tapestry finds have dyed wool wefts, on warps of linen or wool. Linen does not take dyes as easily as wool or silk and was usually used undyed or bleached. Tapestry-weaving was done on simple looms of two-beam vertical construction. Most of the silks – found mainly at Antinoopolis and Panopolis – were woven on more complex looms capable of mechanically repeating patterns for a weft-faced double-sided cloth (taqueté); that is to say, the pattern appears on both sides of the cloth (e.g., Fig. 7.6). Where tapestry-weaving is conducive to improvisation and can accommodate larger-scale motifs in lavish colour schemes, compound weaves have designs based on repeating patterns, usually of small-scale motifs in colour schemes limited by the complexity of the threading of the loom. For a weaver's perspective, see Hoskins 1992.
[3] On these early collections, see Renner 1981: 285–6. On associations between early collections and the textile industry, Roveri and Donadoni 1993, esp. Chiara Buss, 'The Antonio Ratti Collection', pp. 11 and 155 n. 3.
[4] Thompson 1971: 4–5.

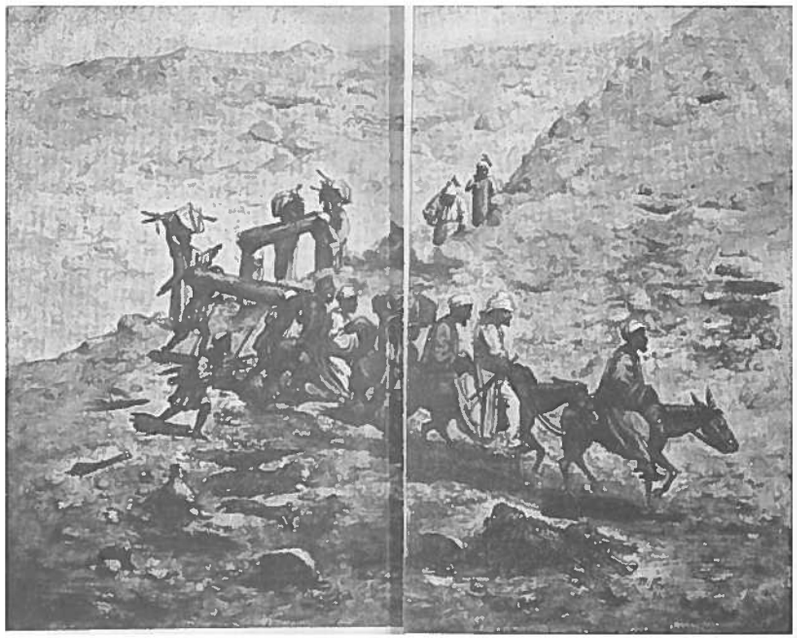

Figure 7.1 'Der Mumientransport'; R. Forrer, *Mein Besuch in el-Achmim: Reisebriefe aus Aegypten* (Strasbourg 1895).

Figure 7.2 'Les corps après le dépouillement. – Fouilles du cimetière romain'; A. Gayet, *Antinoë et les sépultures de Thaïs et Sérapion* (Paris 1902).

Figure 7.3 'Leukyoné'; A. Gayet, *Fantômes d'Antinoé* (Paris 1904).

catalogue had become the predominant mode of publication, overshadowing less frequent archaeological and technical studies. Collection catalogues established a strong tradition of physical description as well as art historical interpretation based on formal features, especially ornamental and iconographic motifs, and stylistic traits. Thus, textiles came to play an important role in developing characterizations of Coptic art.

Subsequent review of the archaeological evidence for the early discoveries, along with mounting archaeological, visual, and written evidence for textiles from a wider range of settings, including smaller towns and military camps, has drastically altered scholarly perspectives on this category of artefact. The larger, more diverse corpus of decorated *and* plain utilitarian

Figure 7.4 Plate 442, Dikran G. Kelekian Album of *c.* 1910. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Nanette B. Kelekian, in honour of Olga Raggio, 2002 (2002.494.841–7). Image © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

textiles in a wide range of materials reflects not only funerary practices but also the habits of everyday life and attests to extensive movement of textile goods within Egypt and beyond its borders, within the later Roman and early Byzantine empires and across broader trade networks. Moreover, the results of scientific analyses compel reconsideration of dating and attribution schemes based primarily on formalist readings. As the corpus has grown, and ideas about and approaches to these textiles have changed significantly over the years, it seems appropriate to consider developments from initial cataloguing efforts and the predominance of formal analyses to current multi-disciplinary, integrative approaches to materials, techniques, and object types, production, circulation, and use.

EARLIEST DISCOVERIES, COLLECTIONS, AND CATALOGUES

Most of the early digs, between about 1880 and 1930, pre-date rigorous archaeological investigation, and so most of the first textile finds established a corpus with little contextual evidence to assist analytical or interpretive efforts. From the best-known of the early find sites, the cemeteries of the Upper Egyptian cities of Panopolis and Antinoopolis, there is documentation that, typically, the dead were dressed in multiple layers of clothing, then wrapped in shrouds securely bound by diagonally crossing cloth tapes.[5] The preservation of a body with these layers of cloth intact after its discovery was rare, although there were notable exceptions. An early excavator at Antinoopolis, the flamboyant Albert Gayet, exhibited clothed corpses in dramatic installations and, in illustrations and even in live fashion shows, presented imaginative reconstructions of how the garments might have been worn (**Fig.** 7.3).[6] More commonly, a body was unwrapped after exhumation, then the better-preserved, more appealing pieces were removed for collection. Collectors prized colour and ornamental compositions and so pieces with these features were retained, whereas the plain-woven and less well-preserved portions of the items to which the decorations belonged were often discarded (as were the bodies). Not infrequently, the most legible, visually appealing part of an ornament has been

[5] For photographic documentation of more recent discoveries of burials at Panopolis, see Griggs et al. 1993; for excellent documentation of this tradition in monastic burials, Winlock et al. 1926.

[6] Gayet's dramatic presentations have been noted in recent surveys: e.g., Rutschowscaya 1990. His publications are more fully described in Rassart-Debergh 1997; del Francia Barocas 1998. For more recent bibliography on Gayet and nineteenth century artistic responses to his finds, see Hoskins 2004. On the popular and literary success of Gayet's tactics, see Cox 2000: 417–19.

freed from drab surroundings, leaving behind a puzzle with few clues as to the cloth's original overall appearance (**Fig.** 7.5).[7]

Thus, as a consequence of preservation conditions and collecting practices, most of the textiles from early digs survive as fragments. In early studies, the fragments were presented accurately as the ornaments from the garments and soft furnishings of burials, but their fragmentary character was not treated as problematic so much as serendipitous for organization by formal characteristics. These fragments were often stored on paper boards (**Fig.** 7.4), arranged much like plates in books devoted to the study of ornament.[8] Indeed, early collection catalogues tended to categorize the fragments by their motifs – as vegetal and geometric, or figural, with pagan mythological or Christian imagery, or some combination of the above – by their colour schemes and by materials and techniques.

Alois Riegl developed categories based on these traits in his 1889 catalogue for the collection at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, which was composed mainly of fragmentary items from the cemeteries of Panopolis and the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara.[9] Similar categories are still in use today.[10] Riegl's catalogue contained few illustrations; however, it was unusually comprehensive in its presentation of a notably wide range of materials and techniques, including cotton finds, for example, along with linen, wool, and silk, plain, twill, and compound weaves – including compound weaves (taquetés) in wool – as well as brocaded (plain weaves with extra wefts) and embroidered (chain-stitch) ornaments, sprang (a twining technique used for caps), knitting (for socks), and felt fabrics. One of the great contributions to ongoing debates made by Riegl's catalogue was his argument that the textiles, including the tapestries, were not exclusively Egyptian in their cultural orientation, but that the 'international character' of their motifs represented the wider worlds of Rome, Byzantium, and Persia.[11] The range of dates Riegl proposed, based mainly on his formalist reading of motifs, spanned the fourth to the

[7] As noted, e.g., in Carroll 1988: 4.

[8] T. K. Thomas, 'Coptic Textiles in the Dikran G. Kelekian Album of c. 1910' (in progress).

[9] Riegl 1889.

[10] Nearly fifty years later, Wulff and Volbach 1926 catalogued the collection of fragments from Saqqara, Fayyum sites, Panopolis, and other Upper Egyptian sites acquired by the State Museum in Berlin, and presented a more detailed scheme of seven categories similarly based on type of motif and colour scheme, materials, and techniques with an eighth 'Klasse' for silk. For a consideration of such categories, see Schrenk 1998.

[11] Indeed, Riegl 1992 (originally published 1893) argued against Gayet's notion of a particularly local, Coptic, style as distinct from an international Byzantine style (e.g., p. 260). Also representative of the strong interest in ornament during this phase of study is Dimand 1924.

Figure 7.5a, b Matching fragments of a tunic ornament, wool and linen, tapestry weave and weft-wrapping, 1940 purchase, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology 26606 A and B.

Figure 7.6 'Tunika mit Gürtel aus frühbyzantinische Zeit'; R. Forrer, *Mein Besuch in el-Achmim. Reisebriefe aus Aegypten* (Strasbourg 1895).

eighth centuries, the last two centuries accounting for Sassanian Persian developments.[12]

In contrast to Riegl's characterization of a formal internationalism reflected across materials and techniques was the divergent assessment assigning tapestry weaves in wool and linen to local production centres and attributing the presence of compound weaves in silk to trade with Hellenistic centres. Consider the instructive example of Robert Forrer, a polymath who discovered and published many of the early finds from Panopolis.[13] In 1891, Forrer published one catalogue on textile finds, mainly tapestry weaves featuring dyed wools,[14] attributing their production to Panopolis (**Fig.** 7.6),

[12] Riegl 1992: 264–5: due to finds of Sassanian coins as well as identifications of ornamental motifs, following Jones 1856.

[13] Schnitzler 1999.

[14] Forrer 1892. Forrer assigned dates according to motif, pagan (earlier) and Christian (later), and style, charting an increasing stylization over time.

Figure 7.7 Silk, weft-faced compound twill, Panopolis, 1910 purchase, Lyon, Musée des Tissus et des Arts décoratifs, 29.254; photo Pierre Verrier.

and another devoted to silk finds from the site precisely because he did not see them as local productions (**Fig.** 7.7).[15] To Forrer, Panopolis was a provincial city unlike the cosmopolitan Alexandria where, he suggested, the silks had been produced.[16] Forrer cited the relevant written sources, from Pliny to Procopius, describing how, until the introduction of sericulture into the Byzantine empire in the mid-sixth century, silk had to be imported through Persia from China. And so Forrer located the Egyptian silk industry in Alexandria, known to have had an imperial textile factory, and surmised the city's participation in an economic system extending beyond the Nile Valley, indeed, beyond the borders of the Roman and Byzantine empires. In other words, Forrer perceived a divide between local Egyptian or Coptic and imported Byzantine textiles. Other scholars noted a similar divide between Coptic and Hellenistic artistic styles.[17]

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES ON COPTIC, BYZANTINE, AND PERSIAN TEXTILE TRADITIONS

In studies of textiles found in Egypt, a tendency to separate out silks from other materials and the silk industry from production of and trade in wool, linen, and cotton persisted for nearly a century.[18] Distinct characterizations

[15] Forrer 1891. He included pure silk textiles as well as any textile with silk in it, identifying several combinations. Most numerous are examples combining linen and silk.

[16] Forrer 1891: 12 assigned the silks to the imperial factory in Alexandria, known through written sources. See also Abdel Aziz Marzouk 1948–9.

[17] E.g., Thomas 2000. For a consideration of key issues associated with this divide in historical studies, see Wipszycka 1992: 126 n. 129, on characterizations of Antinoopolis and Panopolis as Greek and Coptic by reference to their textiles.

[18] The tendency is apparent in both scholarly and popular publications on silk: e.g., von Falke 1922 and 1913; and Bunt 1967, which presents only silks and fragments, with finds from Egypt, Panopolis,

of Coptic tapestries and Byzantine silks are found, for example, in two state-of-the-field articles by the art historian John Beckwith, the first in 1959 on Coptic and the second in 1974 on Byzantine textiles.[19] Both of Beckwith's essays drew upon material found in Egypt; however, he chose not to discuss compound weaves, resist-dyed or embroidered works among the Coptic works.[20] Beckwith's main concern was 'the establishment of a stylistic progression' for the textiles.[21] However, he found useful tools in previous scholars' development of technical principles for yarns, weaves, and dyes and how they might be read for attributions to Egypt and elsewhere.[22] For Beckwith 'Coptic' described local Egyptian style and implied a stylistic progression from Hellenistic (third–fourth century) to not-so-Hellenistic (sixth–seventh century and later). A few known dated works, though, did not suit his project, being too poorly preserved, too plain, or deviating too much from the progression.[23] A similar style-based dating project was undertaken by Pierre DuBourguet in his studies of the collection of Coptic textiles at the Louvre. He developed a chronology with dates extending into the twelfth century in a bold attempt to chart a more rigorously determined stylistic progression.[24] He made an innovative effort to confirm his proposed scheme by ^{14}Carbon (radiocarbon) testing; however, many of the results were too early.[25] It has since become clear that what might be called devolutionary aspects of formalist, style-based chronologies, which emerged with the earliest discoveries[26] but became especially prevalent in the 1960s and 70s, have became untenable in light of scientific analysis and recent archaeological evidence. Thus, Antoine de Moor's

attributed to Alexandria or 'hither Asia'. For a fuller bibliography and overview of the state of research, see Muthesius 1997. The association of silk – especially purple silk – with imperial prerogatives and elite status may have widened even more the gap perceived between the luxurious material of the compound weaves and the materials of wool and linen associated with the Egyptian tapestries: e.g., Reinhold 1970.

[19] Beckwith 1989a and 1989b. [20] Beckwith 1989a: 5.

[21] Beckwith 1989a: 2. [22] Beckwith 1989a: 4–5.

[23] Beckwith 1989a: 2. The deviant was the boldly coloured, geometrically mannered wall hanging from a burial at Antinoopolis (Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Tx 2470) dated by coin and text finds to the mid-fifth century; compare to recent description in *L'Art Copte en Égypte: 2000 ans de christianisme* (Paris) 2000: 154, cat. no. 142. Beckwith's intention was to separate the material into two main groups – before and after the Arab conquest – primarily as an argument for post-conquest continuity of traditions.

[24] Du Bourguet 1964. This catalogue included other techniques as well. It is interesting that he assigned later dates to techniques resulting in more stylized renditions (see above n. 2): e.g., brocades to the ninth century and later and taquetés to the tenth century and later.

[25] Du Bourguet 1957 and 1958. Du Bourguet did not neglect other approaches to dating: Du Bourguet 1966 and 1956.

[26] Emile Guimet waxed lyrical: 'Hélas! Quel art de décadence' (E. Guimet, *Portraits d'Antinoe* 1912: 11, cited in Stauffer 1992: 13).

1993 catalogue of Flemish private collections reported the results of extensive ^{14}Carbon testing, including a range of dates beginning in the fifth and ending in the tenth century, for the type of woollen tapestry-woven tunic DuBourguet had dated between the tenth and twelfth centuries for stylistic reasons.[27]

Beckwith's 'Byzantine Tissues' looked mainly to silk textiles and took into account subsequent text-based histories of the Byzantine silk industry such as Robert Lopez's densely informative article of 1945 that explored the role of the silk industry during the middle Byzantine period of economic dominance and in symbolic political authority.[28] Beckwith grouped pieces in the growing corpus of silks, now including silks from Antinoopolis and Panopolis in Egypt and from Syria[29] as well as those in European treasuries,[30] according to structural categories standardized only a decade earlier.[31] Indeed, since the 1960s, the documentation and analysis of technical data have been fuelled by the publication of technical reference works, the establishment of organizations and institutions dedicated to the collection and study of textiles,[32] and the development of a specialization in archaeological textiles.[33] For those silks Beckwith assigned to the early Byzantine period, he gave attributions to unidentified eastern Mediterranean centres, regardless of original find site, explicitly bypassing Persia.[34]

[27] de Moor 1993: e.g., cat. no. 119 (p. 226) where ^{14}Carbon analysis yielded dates between the fifth and seventh century, a type assigned a tenth/twelfth century dating by Du Bourguet; cat. no. 85 (p. 185), dated between the sixth and eighth century by ^{14}Carbon testing, tenth century by Du Bourguet; cat. no. 88 (p. 188), dated between the eighth and tenth centuries by ^{14}Carbon testing, twelfth century by Du Bourguet. Assigning dates remains a chronic problem. Schrenk 1998: 360–2 provides a useful overview of attempted datings of works from unsystematic excavation of Egyptian city cemeteries by style, by ^{14}Carbon testing, and by contextual evidence from more recent excavations.

[28] Lopez 1945: 1–42. See also Jacoby 1991–2 and Muthesius 1993.

[29] Beckwith 1989b: 39, citing Syrian finds in Pfister 1934; 1940; 1951.

[30] Beckwith 1989b: 38. Textiles deemed 'Byzantine' are usually silk and relatively rare, preserved mainly in European treasuries instead of in Byzantine contexts: Kazhdan and Talbot 1991, s.v. 'Textiles'; Muthesius 1997.

[31] Centre international d'étude des textiles anciens 1964, adapted and expanded by Burnham 1980. Of particular interest for the present discussion are the terms compound twill and twill damask. See also Emery 1966.

[32] Centres include The Textile Museum in Washington, founded in 1925; CIETA at the Musée Historique des Tissus in Lyon, in 1954; the Abegg Stiftung in Riggisberg, near Berne, in 1961 (Flury-Lemburg 1988); and, in 1995, the Ratti Center at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

[33] Publication milestones include: Fiske 1975; Walton and Eastwood 1980; Cardon and Feugère 2000; and, testimony to J. P. Wild's central role in the training of specialists in archaeological textiles, Rogers et al. 2001. Schrenk (Riggisberger Berichte 13) is forthcoming.

[34] Beckwith 1989b: 39–41. Some of the Antinoopolis silks have also been attributed to Sassanian Persia: Pfister 1948 and Geijer 1963. Flury-Lemburg 1988: 423 points out that Beckwith's Byzantine attribution of the Antinoopolis silks must be reconsidered in light of Geijer's technical observation that the weft system of silks from Antinoopolis has a density of 20–9 picks per cm, while silks from court manufacturers have only 14–17.

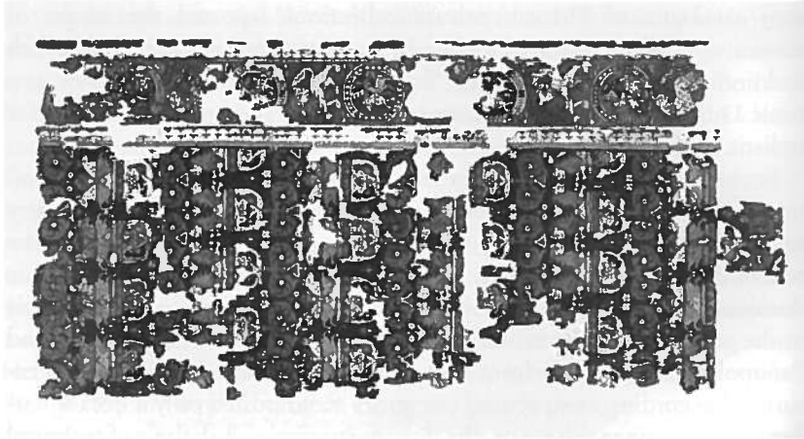

Figure 7.8 'Horse and Lion Tapestry', wool, tapestry weave, Dumbarton Oaks Collection, 39.13; photo Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Photographic and Fieldwork Archives, Washington.

Other studies, however, continued to credit Persia as a key player in textile, especially silk, production and trade with the early Byzantine empire, including Egypt. An extensive article by Ernst Kitzinger, published in 1946, on the polychrome wool Horse and Lion Tapestry acquired by Dumbarton Oaks in 1939 (**Fig.** 7.8), situated the *chôra* of Egypt within the Byzantine sphere through a consideration of ornament, as Riegl had done, as well as considerations of other factors.[35] That article explored affinities between 'Persian–Byzantine' wools *and* silks, partly as an exercise in correlating stylistic classifications with groupings by material and technique. Kitzinger deemed the Dumbarton Oaks hanging and related works to be tapestry copies or transformations of compound-woven silks, attributing a group of related works to a Persian vogue in fifth- to sixth-century Egypt.[36]

Similarly recognizing an intermingling of cultural traditions, Lenzen's 1960 interpretation of a neckpiece fragment from a Roman-style tunic representing the Triumph of Dionysos, probably from Panopolis, explored the Hellenistic side of Byzantine heritage in the *chôra*.[37] Lenzen's study

[35] Kitzinger 1946.

[36] Kitzinger 1946: 21 characterizes the Persian motifs as 'foreign to the Mediterranean world'. Since Riegl's 1889 catalogue, there had been forays into 'Persanerie-Byzantine', to borrow the phrase coined in Peirce and Tyler 1936. Their discussion, unlike Kitzinger's, bypasses Egypt. For a recent study of Persian silks within the Byzantine Egyptian context, see Martiniani-Reber 1986.

[37] Lenzen 1960.

also demonstrated the utility of treating certain figural motifs to sustained iconographical analysis: some of these compositions clearly reflect literary trends of the day, including, as Lenzen demonstrated, the epic poem on Dionysos by Nonnus of Panopolis. Jaroslav Pelikan's extended reading of the monumental wall hanging in the Cleveland Museum of Art revealed an iconic reflection of sophisticated discourses in Byzantine theology (**Fig.** 7.9).[38]

By the mid-1960s, the catalogue of Coptic textiles was an established genre, with its overview of post-pharaonic Egypt, its introduction outlining the history of the collection under discussion, brief descriptions (or glossaries) of materials and techniques with an emphasis on tapestry-weaving, and the ornamented Roman–Byzantine tunic, followed by catalogue entries for ornamental fragments from tunics and, more rarely, complete garments.[39] The format was reinvigorated in the 1980s by a veritable explosion of collection and exhibition catalogues that significantly altered the corpus of known works, both by increasing the number and kind of published works (reflecting continued activity on the art market and excavations of museum storerooms) with detailed analyses of materials, weaving techniques, and fabric structures, and by their characterizations of the works.[40] James Trilling, for example, in his 1982 catalogue for The Textile Museum, persuasively arguing against exclusively Coptic attributions for tapestries, situated the production and ornamentation of the textiles under discussion within a pan-Mediterranean setting and, reviewing the archaeological evidence for dating, assigned a range of dates corresponding to the early Byzantine period.[41] Notably, attention focused on Antinoopolis has resulted in two important exhibitions with catalogues, and publications of many previously unknown garments and other objects from Gayet's and other excavations at the site, including a nearly complete cloak of purple silk.[42]

As most textiles from the earliest collections were fragments from garments, they came to figure prominently in costume histories. Tunics dominated general surveys of Roman and early Byzantine costume,[43] and

[38] Pelikan 1990.

[39] Riegl 1889; Wulff and Volbach 1926; Kendrick 1920–2; Du Bourguet 1964; Thompson 1971; Baginski and Tidhar 1980.

[40] As suggested by the impressively extensive (but not exhaustive) listing in Schrenk 2004: 500–2.

[41] Trilling 1982; Carroll 1988 focused on loom technology as inferred from fabric structure and written sources and, again, through careful readings of written sources, supported the pan-Mediterranean setting for production and trade.

[42] Rassart-Debergh 1997; Hoskins 2004; del Francia Barocas 1998: cape, cat. no. 305. For Panopolis, see, e.g., Cortopassi 2003 and Martiniani-Reber 1989.

[43] E.g., Houston 1931, reprinted numerous times, and Wilson 1938, which made use of the Egyptian finds. See also Sebesta and Bonfante 1994.

Figure 7.9 Icon of the Virgin, Egypt, Byzantine period, sixth century. Slit and dove-tailed tapestry weave; wool; 178 × 110 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Leonard C. Hanna, Jr, Bequest 1967.144.

variations on the tunic and shawl constituted the most common ensemble among the archaeological remains and visual evidence from Egypt. The tunic was simply constructed, loosely draped, variously coloured, and traditionally ornamented (**Fig.** 7.10). There were, as well, examples of fitted garments of Persian tradition, including an outer coat with a markedly

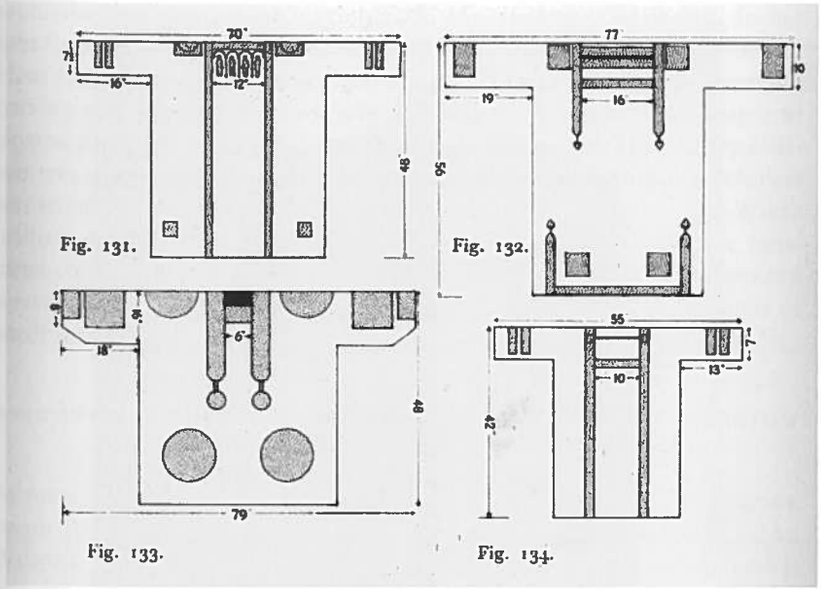

Figure 7.10 Diagrams of ornamented tunics; M. Houston, *Ancient Greek, Roman and Byzantine Costume and Decoration* (London 1931).

different silhouette, sewed to follow the contours of the torso, open down the front, with slender sleeves so exaggeratedly long they would cover the hands unless pushed up along the arms (**Fig.** 7.11). This type of coat is now recognized as one piece in the so-called Persian Riding Costume, of which several complete examples were excavated at the turn of the century from Byzantine-period graves at Antinoopolis.[44] Belonging to this costume were fitted leggings, some similarly trimmed, some more elaborately decorated.[45] It seems that Antinoites were able to acquire numerous cloth goods that were rare and expensive, perhaps understood to be exotic by their materials, dyestuffs, ornamentation, or type.

Alongside recognition of a wider range of garment types within the draped early Byzantine and tailored Persian traditions are focused, in-depth studies of garment construction, highlighting previously unremarked

[44] Excellent overview of this type of costume and range of costumes: Knauer 2004. [14]Carbon testing yields dates from the fifth to seventh century: De Moor et al. 2004.
[45] Linscheid 2004. See also Bénazeth 1991.

Figure 7.11 Persian coat, wool, tapestry weave, trimmed with silk, from Antinoopolis, fifth–seventh century, Lyon, Musée des Tissus et des Arts Décoratifs, Inv. 968, III.1 (34872); photo D. R.

sophistication of weaving techniques for the shaping of garments. In her 1982 foundational article 'Weaving Clothes to Shape in the Ancient World', Hero Granger-Taylor pointed out how the Roman tradition of weaving curving and discontinuous selvedges continued in Egypt throughout and beyond the Byzantine period.[46] A tour de force of multi-disciplinary analysis was commissioned by the Abegg-Stiftung, when a group of scholars was assembled to report on a single item, tunic no. 4219; John Peter Wild's brilliant contribution demonstrated how this sleeveless tunic in a weft-faced compound weave in wool should be seen alongside silk compound weaves, woollen taqueté furnishings, and cotton examples, all products of small workshops specialized according to technique and type of loom.[47]

EVIDENCE FOR THE VARIETY, PRODUCTION, AND CIRCULATION OF TEXTILES IN EGYPT AND BEYOND

As more systematic excavations were undertaken, contextual information began to enter archaeological reports and collection catalogues. Lilian Wilson's 1933 catalogue of textiles in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, for example, recorded locus information for textiles excavated by the University of Michigan at the Fayyum town of Karanis, the first habitation site to give significant numbers of textiles to the growing corpus. These were mainly rags from the unswept corners of houses and the town's rubbish heaps, again fragmentary but tremendously interesting for their wide range of materials, techniques, and possible uses. Discovered were samples of felt, weft-faced compound weaves (taqueté) in wool (**Fig.** 7.12), what appear to be tapestry imitations of taqueté, rags recycled into pads sometimes called rag amalgams (**Fig.** 7.13), dolls or perhaps amulets, utilitarian items, and furnishings made of goat hair in plain weaves and twills.[48] Most of the textiles were found in areas dated between the third and fifth century, that is, spanning the periods of Roman and early Byzantine rule. Although the evidence does not support the development of detailed chronologies, there is sufficient cause to reconsider the continuing vitality of Roman traditions at Karanis.

Documentary papyri from Karanis and other Egyptian sites provided the foundation for Ewa Wipszycka's monumental work of 1965 on the textile industry throughout the *chôra* during the Roman and late Roman

[46] Granger-Taylor 1982.
[47] Wild 1994; Rogers 1994; De Jonghe and Verhecken-Lammens 1994.
[48] Wilson 1933; Thomas 2001: 27–33 on House 124, which contained a variety of fabric types ranging from crude to rather fine in execution.

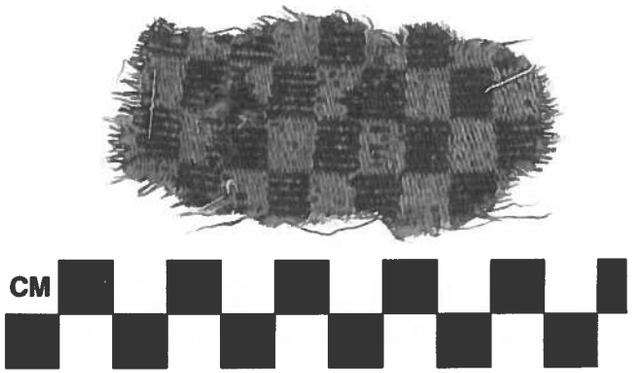

Figure 7.12 Fragment of a cover, weft-faced compound twill, dyed wools, Karanis 24–5016A, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 12798.

periods.[49] A text-based map of important production centres would include Alexandria, Antinoopolis, and Panopolis, in fact, just about every major habitation site for which we have significant numbers of documentary papyri. The documentary sources cumulatively describe a professionalized, imperially regulated industry spanning imperial factories and large privately owned workshops, which were rare, and more common smaller workshops and in-home ad hoc situations. The sources also point to numerous modes of consumption, such as hiring professional weavers to work in the home, commissioning goods from weaving establishments, purchasing ready-made items, and selling and buying already used items as textiles continued to circulate over time.[50] One of the largest, steadiest markets in Egypt, for which taxation was key, was the Roman military.[51] Documentary papyri from Karanis, for example, record individuals' acquisitions of textiles locally and via long-distance traffic.[52]

The longevity of Roman traditions is evident at other sites as well. Model reports by Rudolf Pfister and Louisa Bellinger, from the early 1930s to the early 1950s, of textiles excavated in Syria at Dura Europos (dated before AD 256), Palmyra (before 273), and Halabiyeh-Zenobia (before 610) not only set high standards for the technical description of textile artefacts but also provided useful comparisons for materials and techniques, ornament and dating.[53] Subsequent excavations in Israel and Jordan, and further

[49] Wipszycka 1965 and 1991 and van Minnen 1986. [50] Husselman 1961.
[51] Perhaps only for troops stationed within Egypt: Wipszycka 1965: 159. See also Sheridan 1998.
[52] Thomas 2001: 19. [53] Pfister 1934 and 1951; Pfister and Bellinger 1945.

Figure 7.13 Karanis rag amalgam, fabric fragments sewn together in parallel rows of running stitches into a pad of multiple discontinuous layers, Karanis 25–4009A–L, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, 10375.

south in Nubia at burial sites, forts, and other settlements have brought to light comparanda for Roman textile types known from Egypt.[54] Especially important are the many textile fragments found at the Red Sea sites in Egypt. Among the 'tens of thousands' of textiles found at Mons Claudianus are damask twills and resist-printed wool.[55] Among the finds at Berenike (early and late Roman) are rag amalgams, resist-dyed cotton, and a fragment of

[54] Bergman 1975; Williams 1979; Adams and Crowfoot 2001; Sheffer and Granger-Taylor 1994: 149–256; Yadin 1963; Granger-Taylor 2000.
[55] Described and illustrated in Jørgensen 1991: 83–95. Additional materials and fabric types may be found in Jørgensen 2000. Strategies for studying the tremendous quantities of textiles are outlined in Jørgensen 1991 and Jørgensen and Mannering 2001.

a cotton sail.[56] The cotton finds are, perhaps, most significant, for they provide archaeological evidence that cotton was commonly imported into Egypt from India, perhaps across the Red Sea, and from Nubia, much earlier than attested by previously known finds. There is also evidence that cotton was grown and worked in Egypt.[57] Moreover, the early resist-dyed cotton from Berenike can be compared to resist-dyed textiles in other materials from Berenike, Panopolis, and other sites.[58]

Consequently, the map of find sites for textiles in Egypt is now part of a larger map that includes Europe and the Mediterranean, Syro-Palestine and Mesopotamia, the Red Sea and, within Africa, the entire Nile Valley.[59] This wider conception of textile production and trade accords with written records for the circulation of silk, fine linens, cottons, and wools across the Red Sea and along land routes linking the Near East to Asia.[60] Already in 1987 John Peter Wild observed: 'A glance at the entries in the Edict of Diocletian shows that in the early fourth century a wealthy man could buy silk yarn, purchase [the appropriate loom], hire a skilled silk-weaver, and have the cloth made up anywhere in the Roman Empire.'[61] This statement has been supported by subsequent excavations and studies.[62] One could, it seems, enlarge this statement to include cotton and wool yarns and finished goods, as well as technology.[63]

[56] Wild and Wild 2000.

[57] Wild and Wild 2000: 271–4. In part due to textual attestations to cotton in Egypt, scholars expected to find cotton artefacts and began to compile rare early examples of cotton from Egypt: e.g., Greiss 1952. Lamm 1937 noted rare early examples from Egypt (Antinoopolis and Karanis) and Syria, and combinations of cotton with other materials, in a variety of techniques, including weft-faced compound twills and tapestries, as well as cotton embroidery. Wild 1997 describes the over 400 cottons from fourth- and fifth-century deposits found during the 1994 and 1995 seasons. He considers a range of evidence for their origin via Red Sea trade in cotton and trade from Nubia. See also Gervers 1990.

[58] And, just as Lamm had done in 1937, scholars continued to look east, across the Red Sea and beyond, for additions to the corpus of Roman and early Byzantine cottons: e.g., van der Borg, de Jong, McClintock, and van Strydonck 1994. See esp. Vogelsang-Eastwood 1990; and Desrosiers et al. 2001.

[59] For Mesopotamia (Iraq), see, e.g., Fujii et al. 1997; 1994.

[60] Casson 1989; Wild 2002.

[61] Wild 1987: 471, who continues: 'The presumption remains, however, that his task would be the easier, the closer he lived to Syria.' On evidence for trade in materials, see Stauffer 2000.

[62] Muthesius 1997 in her studies of silk compound weaves, mainly from European treasuries, situated Egyptian finds within the Byzantine sphere, without specific attributions to Egypt or Syria or Greece. Carroll 1988, in a close reading of Diocletian's price edict of 301, noted that textiles are typically referred to by the name of their place of origin, even when referring to a copy of a copy of a textile type made elsewhere (12), in support of her argument 'that Coptic textiles were produced to compete, in both price and quantity, with textiles from other parts of the ancient world. For this reason, they are unlikely to have been greatly different from standard types of textiles made in other places' (8).

[63] E.g., a recent overview of Chinese origins and experimental archaeological developments of Persian and Egyptian developments of looms for compound weaves: Ciszuk 2000. See also De Jonghe 2001, based on third- to fourth-century silks found in Syria and Eastern and Northern Europe. Instrumental in initiating recent discussions of technology development and transfer is Barber 1991.

Scholars of Byzantine dress have developed a similarly broad geographical outlook.[64] Widespread use of the same types of ornamental motifs and compositions may have been due to circulation of woven textiles, similar motifs in other media, or, in some cases, to reliance upon the same or similar models painted on papyrus for weavers.[65] Consideration of these models can provide insight into how individual commissioners and/or weavers might have selected ornamental formats and devised their arrangement for articles of clothing, whether for liturgical or magical purposes or to suit personal taste. That is to say, these models encourage new insights into individual agency in the creation of garments and other textile goods.[66] Ornament remains a key subject for the characterization of textile traditions and practices and now ornament is enjoying a resurgence of art historical interest, as is Riegl's formalism.[67] Similarly, critical approaches to textiles look back to foundational works of early archaeologists and scholars, to the roles dealers, collectors, and artists played in the shaping of scholarly responses to the textiles' colours and motifs.[68]

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[64] Fluck and Vogelsang-Eastwood 2004; and Ball 2001.

[65] There have been several publications of weavers' models painted on papyrus; especially useful are Horak 1992 and Stauffer 1996. Moreover, the recent publication of textiles excavated at Palmyra, including those published by Pfister and Bellinger along with new discoveries of the 1990s, demonstrated correspondences in ornament type with European finds that may, possibly, help chart trade connections: for Palmyrene-type decorative bands (in gold and purple silk) found in Naintré (Vienna), see Cardon 1999–2000: 96, cat. no. 22; see also Schmidt-Colinet, Stauffer, and Al 'Asad 2000.

[66] Maguire 1990; Stauffer 1992: 15–21 and *passim*; Thomas 1997–2000. Ball 2001 and Kalamara 1995 are sensitive to the distinctions between the social and personal statements made by the wearers of garments, and both studies are very much aware of theoretical approaches to the study of dress. Parani 2003 explores the different kinds of expression intended by representations of garments.

[67] E.g., Trilling 1985: 46–7 on ornament of Byzantine Egyptian textiles; 2003: 57–60; on Riegl, 2003: 55. See also, e.g., Olin 1992 and Woodfield 2001.

[68] E.g., Schrenk 2004: 9–11, 451–2; see above nn. 3 and 6.

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CHAPTER 8

Between tradition and innovation: Egyptian funerary practices in late antiquity

Françoise Dunand

Egyptian funerary practices are very well documented until a late date – traditional practices, that is, related to the old Egyptian creeds about the afterlife. Many cemeteries dating from the Roman period have been explored. The experience of a team I direct, which is currently working upon cemeteries of the oasis of Kharga (western desert), is not atypical. These cemeteries were occupied from the early Ptolemaic period until the fourth or fifth century. With these tombs, we are in a completely traditional world: mummies wrapped in bandages, with masks and decorated cartonnages, food offerings, small statues of funerary gods like Osiris or Anubis, objects of everyday life. All accounts of exploration of Egyptian cemeteries, the recent ones as well as the older ones, lead to the same conclusions: until a very late period, Egyptian people were buried with the same rituals which had been elaborated in much older times. The other world they imagined was clearly the same world which appears in the Books of the Dead of the second millennium BC (I refer, for example, to the beautiful paintings of the tomb of Petosiris at Muzawwaka, oasis of Dakhla, which are dated to the second century AD).

When we consider Christian funerary practices in Egypt, however, the problem becomes more difficult and complex. First of all, information coming from archaeological exploration of cemeteries is not plentiful. The first question is how to identify Christian tombs, which were very often located together with 'pagan' ones. This is the case with Hawara (Fayyum), Karara (El Hibeh), and even Bagawat (oasis of Kharga). If there is no explicit sign present (like a cross, for example), we cannot say if Christian people are concerned. Almost all truly and clearly Christian tombs which have been explored were related to monasteries. Of course, they are not less interesting for that; but unfortunately many of these excavations were carried out at a time when archaeologists were rather less careful than would be expected nowadays, particularly concerning human remains. Many of them were not as careful as W. M. F. Petrie. Above all, they simply did not know what

to do with human remains, so they discarded them. That is the reason why we are very often short of information about the dead, the treatment they received, and even their environment.

SOURCES

First of all, a survey of our sources of information, mostly archaeological, seems to me necessary. About 1880, R. Forrer excavated Christian tombs near Akhmim (Middle Egypt). Unfortunately, it seems that he was principally interested in artefacts, particularly textiles (so that many beautiful tissues went to German museums), and his work was too often lacking scientific value. It is almost impossible to extract from his books precise information about funerary practices.[1]

The oldest good, if not complete, description of Christian tombs was given by James E. Quibell.[2] The tombs which he excavated near the Monastery of Jeremias at Saqqara could be dated from the fifth to the ninth century AD. Some years later, in 1926, H. E. Winlock and W. E. Crum published their research about the Monastery of Epiphanius, in the Theban west bank, where eleven tombs of monks were excavated (**Fig.** 8.1).[3] The monastery was dated to the seventh century AD. In the same year, 1926, H. Ranke published the cemetery of Karara (El Hibeh, Middle Egypt), which had been explored during the year 1914.[4] In this cemetery, many tombs are obviously Christian, and three are certainly 'pagan' (traditional). However, the author acknowledges that, in most cases, it is impossible to identify them as 'Christian' or 'pagan'. Moreover, precise information about human remains from this site is unhappily lacking.

Inside the beautiful temple of Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahari, on the upper terrace, a monastery consecrated to St Phoibammon, with many tombs, had been discovered by E. Naville during the last years of the nineteenth century. This monastery is referred to in many texts from the end of the sixth century AD.[5] Some work was carried out at the site by Winlock between 1911 and 1931. Unfortunately, the monastery had already been partly destroyed, and the excavations by Naville completed its destruction.[6] Information about the tombs has been gathered by W. Godlewski.[7]

[1] Forrer 1883. [2] Quibell 1912. [3] Winlock et al. 1926.
[4] Ranke 1926. [5] Papaconstantinou 2001: 206ff.
[6] The high tower of the monastery, made of mudbricks, is still visible upon photos dated 1892; cf. James 1983, figs. 19–20.
[7] Godlewski 1986.

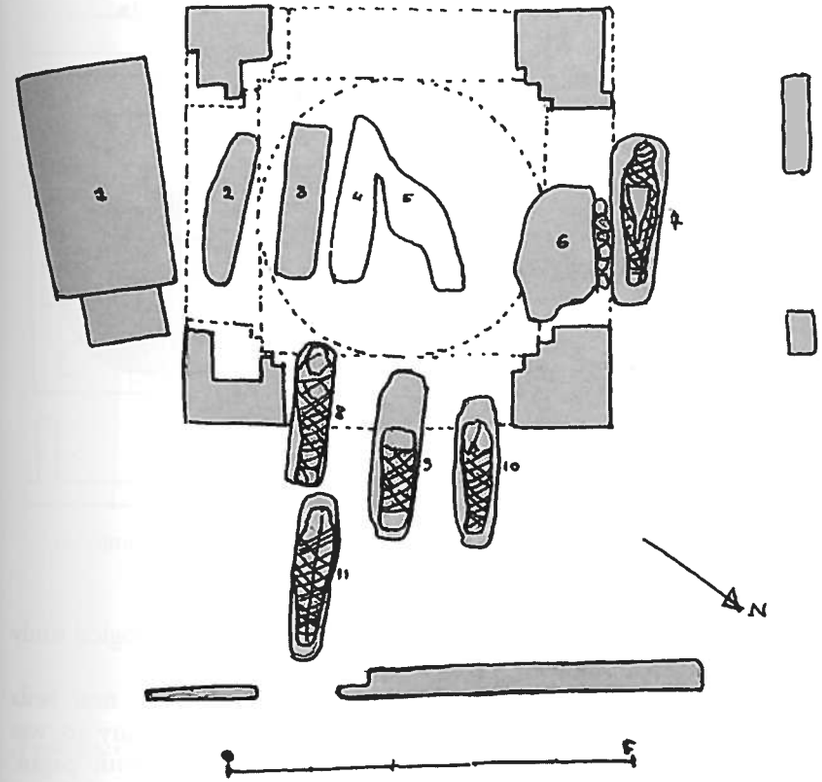

Figure 8.1 Plan of the necropolis of the monks of the Monastery of Epiphanius, Thebes, seventh century AD (after H. Winlock).

The cemeteries at Antinoopolis (Middle Egypt) had been explored during the last years of the nineteenth century by a French mission directed by A. Gayet. Obviously, his methods were not at all scientific and his results are dubious. Exploration was resumed from 1935, then after the Second World War, by Italian missions with E. Breccia, A. Adriani, and S. Donadoni. A study by R. Grilletto was devoted to human remains.[8]

In the year 1971, some tombs were discovered near the Monastery of St Mark, at Gournet Mouraï (Theban west bank) by a mission of the French Institute of Archaeology in Cairo. Eight mummies of monks were found; one of them was very precisely described (at least concerning his clothing)

[8] Grilletto 1981: 119–23.

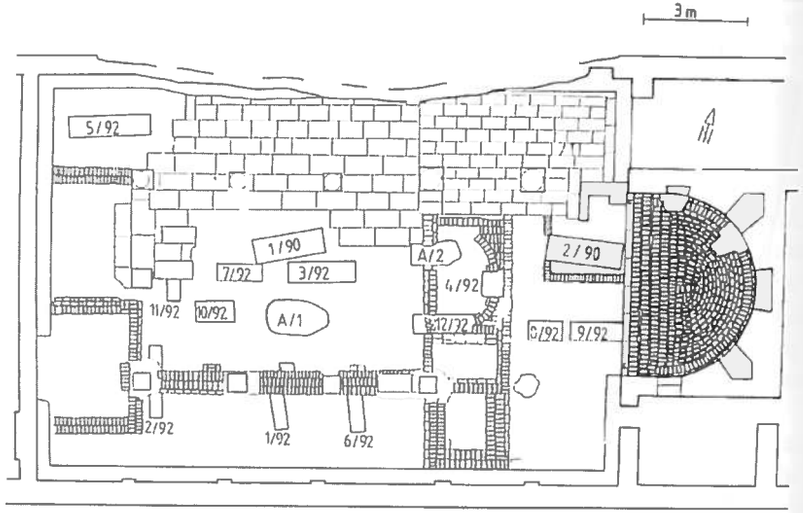

Figure 8.2 Plan of the necropolis of the monks of Abu Fano, fourth century AD (after H. Buschhausen).

by G. Castel.[9] Later on, E. Prominska published an anthropological study of three of these mummies.[10]

From the early eighties, a cemetery at Fag el Gamous, near Seila (Fayyum), dating from the first century BC to the eighth century AD, was explored by a mission directed by C. W. Griggs. Together with 'pagan' tombs, many Christian tombs were found. Their description and dating are not as precise as would be desired.[11] During the same period, a Polish mission explored another site in Fayyum, the monastery of Naqlun, located south-west of the main city of the oasis, Medinet el-Fayyum. A cemetery was situated near the monastery, probably dating from the seventh century AD; it does not seem that it has so far received a systematic exploration and study.[12]

Between 1987 and 1990, the monastery of Abu Fano, south of Minya (Middle Egypt), was explored by a team directed by H. Buschhausen. It could be one of the oldest monasteries of Egypt, dating to the fourth century AD. Many tombs of monks were discovered under the paving of the church (**Fig**. 8.2); a complete study was realized for some mummies, particularly the mummy of Apa Bane, the patron saint of the monastery.[13]

[9] Castel 1979: 121–43. [10] Prominska 1986: 113–21. [11] Griggs 1990 and 1992.
[12] Godlewski 1992 and 1993. [13] Buschhausen 1996: 59–68.

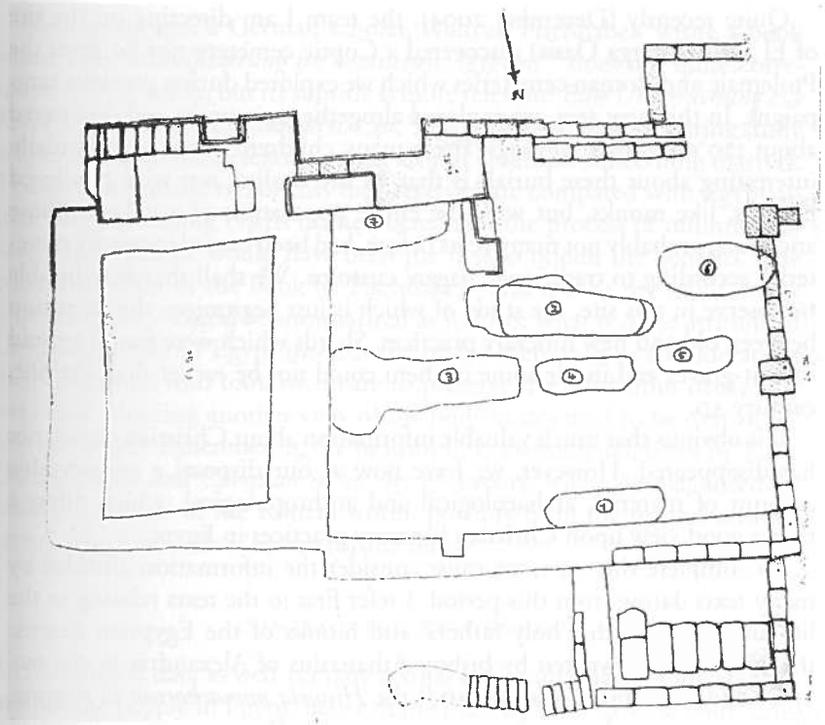

Figure 8.3 Plan of the tomb P1, necropolis of the columbarium, Douch, end of the fourth century AD (after N. Henein).

In the early nineties, a team from the French Institute of Archaeology in Cairo, which had explored the 'pagan' cemetery at Douch (oasis of Kharga), discovered in a nearby area a tomb whose structure was quite different. It consisted of a small vaulted chapel made of mudbrick, encircled by a walled enclosure; inside this enclosure, several graves, which were dug not very deeply in the sand, contained mummies (**Fig**. 8.3). Obviously, it was a family tomb, with two adult mummies (man and woman) and five children. This kind of disposition, as well as the condition of the mummies, referred clearly to Christian practices. A coin found in one of the graves was dated AD 378 – a time during which Egypt was becoming mainly Christian. We X-rayed these mummies and described their environment.[14] Remains of many other tombs of the same type can be observed on the site.

[14] Dunand et al. 2005.

Quite recently (December 2004), the team I am directing on the site of El Deir (Kharga Oasis) discovered a Coptic cemetery not far from the Ptolemaic and Roman cemeteries which we explored during previous campaigns. In this new area, we explored altogether 150 tombs and discovered about 120 mummies, amongst them many children. What is particularly interesting about these burials is that we are dealing not with privileged persons, like monks, but with the entire population of a village, whose ancestors, probably not many years before, had been buried in nearby cemeteries according to traditional 'pagan' customs. We shall therefore be able to observe in this site, the study of which is just beginning, the transition between old and new funerary practices. Shards which were found around the pit-graves and inside some of them could not be earlier than the fifth century AD.

It is obvious that much valuable information about Christian cemeteries has disappeared. However, we have now at our disposal a considerable amount of material, archaeological and anthropological, which offers a rather good view upon Christian funerary practices in Egypt.

To complete this view, we must consider the information afforded by many texts dating from this period. I refer first to the texts relating to the life and death of the 'holy fathers' and monks of the Egyptian deserts: the *Vita Antonii*, written by bishop Athanasius of Alexandria in the second half of the fourth century AD,[15] the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, which was written by monks coming from Jerusalem to visit their Egyptian colleagues at the end of the fourth century AD,[16] the *Historia Lausiaca* by Palladius, which he probably wrote about AD 420,[17] and the various collected stories called *Apophthegmata patrum*, which were probably assembled towards the end of the fifth century.[18] All these texts include many quite interesting elements about the image of death among these holy persons; they are not very explicit about real practices concerning the dead. What is more, they are often distorted (to my mind) by a clear desire to differ from 'pagan' customs, if not indeed to contrast with them. Much information could also be gathered from Greek and Coptic documentary texts from this period like private letters or testaments, as well as funerary inscriptions.[19]

[15] *Vie et conduite de notre Père saint Antoine*, trans. B. Lavaud (Paris 1989).
[16] Ed. A. J. Festugière (Brussels 1961); French translation *Enquête sur les moines d'Égypte* (Paris 1964).
[17] *The Lausiac History of Palladius*, ed. C. Butler (Cambridge 1904).
[18] *Les Apophtegmes des Pères: Collection systématique*, ed. and trans. J. C. Guy (Sources chrétiennes 387, Paris 1993).
[19] Cf. Lefebvre 1907; Cramer 1941.

Some years ago, a German scholar, Gudrun Fischhaber, wrote a book whose title, *Mumifizierung im koptischen Ägypten*,[20] does not quite correspond to its content, but its subtitle is more relevant: *Eine Untersuchung zur Körperlichkeit im 1. Jahrtausend n. Chr.* This quite new and interesting study is founded upon many texts from the Coptic tradition concerning martyrs. The various horrific treatments they received are compared with Egyptian tradition concerning Osiris dismembered and the process of mummification – of which he would have been the first to obtain the benefits. The central question of the book by Fischhaber– and it is to my mind a very important one – could be summarized as follows: what was the attitude of Christian people in Egypt towards the body? Were they as considerate as their ancestors, who took such care to preserve the dead from decay? Or were they adopting another view of the body as doomed to be destroyed? It is also worth remembering the beautiful, if controversial, book by E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety*, where he diagnosed an 'endemic disease' of the Roman world, possibly from the second century AD on, which he called 'hatred for the body'.[21]

CONFLICTING EVIDENCE

Archaeological data as well as many textual testimonia clearly indicate that most of the people in Egypt, between the third and the sixth–seventh centuries AD, were anxious to preserve the dead from decay. Until the fourth century, mummies were often treated with the same elaborate methods which were used in older times. Inside a tomb of the 'pagan' cemetery at Douch (Kharga Oasis), we found three mummies, two adults and a child, in excellent condition, with carefully performed wrappings, which could not be earlier than AD 315 (possibly later). However, in another cemetery on the same site, this time a Christian one, we found a group of mummies, dating about AD 380, which were well preserved, but whose treatment had been quite different (**Figs.** 8.4–5). As is well known, 'classical' mummification implied normally that internal organs should be removed, but this was not necessary; in many cases, these organs were simply desiccated by putting inside the body small bags of natron. The most important operation consisted of drying up the body by means of what is called a 'bath of natron' – not a bath, in fact, because natron was used like salt (like washing soda). The body, when deprived of all its fat and water, could be anointed and made more supple (as far as possible) with perfumed oils. No such treatment,

[20] Fischhaber 1997. [21] Dodds 1965.

Figure 8.4 Mummy P1.2.1.3, necropolis of the columbarium, Douch, end of the fourth century AD; photo R. Lichtenberg.

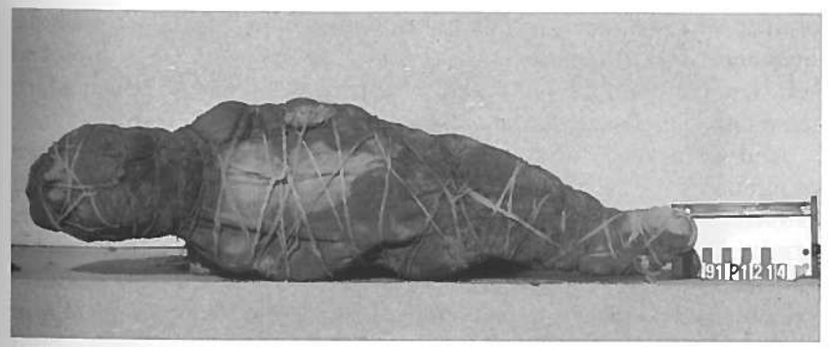

Figure 8.5 Mummy P1.2.1.4, necropolis of the columbarium, Douch, end of the fourth century AD; photo R. Lichtenberg.

obviously, was applied to our Christian mummies. Their bodies were not eviscerated (as was still the case for many 'pagan' mummies); it seems they had not been 'bathed' in natron, but thick slabs of salt had been put upon the body, close to the skin, and between the layers of funerary wrappings. There was salt, too, inside the graves. These bodies were apparently in a rather good condition, faces rather expressive, with hair well preserved as well as mustaches (for the men). They were found completely desiccated, but it seems that the use of salt in big quantities had not been enough to prevent completely the process of decay: when we took them for study and X-raying, they spread a very bad smell (unlike the many stories in which the bodies of holy men were found perfectly preserved and sweet-smelling). The bodies of the two adults were wrapped from head to feet in big linen shrouds, with a special bandage passing under the chin, tied on the top of the head; those of small children were very tightly wrapped, the clothing maintained by tapes or small ropes.

This simplified technique of preservation of the dead seems to have been used all over Egypt at the time when Christianity was becoming a majority religion, that is from the second half of the fourth century AD on. It lasted until the seventh century, as is obvious from the study by Winlock, who described with great precision the mummies of monks which he excavated in the Monastery of Epiphanius. Only five mummies were discovered inside very simple and not very deep graves. Here too, a lot of 'coarse salt' had been deposited upon the bodies, between the wrappings, and even inside the grave, together with plants. Juniper berries had been deposited upon the bodies, probably to give them a 'good smell'. It seems that funerary clothing was rather elaborate: six or eight big new linen shrouds, some

of them with coloured decoration, maintained by tapes crossing upon the sides and faces. A bandage was tied under the chin. A leather apron and belt were put upon the last shroud (in one case under it). The mat which the monk had used to sleep on covered his dead body.

A more complete study was made by E. Prominska of the mummies of monks of the Theban monastery of St Mark. There were no traces of extraction of the inner organs, but the bodies were covered with thick layers of salt (natron). Prominska noted that the skin was very often oily, covered with fat, spreading a 'characteristic smell' – obviously for the same reasons as was observed on the mummies at Douch. Some of these mummies were in good condition, with well-preserved hair and nails. All bodies were wrapped in shrouds and bandages, sometimes maintained by tapes. A leather apron was deposited upon the last layer of clothing.

When he described the mummies he found in the Christian tombs at Saqqara, which are dated between the fifth and ninth century AD, Quibell gave many details about their clothing: some of them had quite elaborate garments, made of coloured linen or even silk; bunches of various plants had been deposited near them in the graves. We do not have much information about the bodies themselves, but we can think that they had been treated by embalmers: one of them had been consolidated with *gerid* (palm stalks), which is a very old technique, frequently used by 'pagan' embalmers, and some had preserved their hair. The mummies from the cemetery at Karara were not really studied, but Ranke gives some interesting details about their appearance and environment. They were wrapped in shrouds and bandages, deposited upon boards or beds made of palm leaves. Some of them had their head (and sometimes their feet) protected by a kind of cage made of wood or *gerid* wrapped with linen. A very beautifully painted wood coffin offers this kind of arrangement, with a high triangular part for the head. We must remember that, in much older times, particular care concerned the head of the dead; formulae of the *Book of the Dead* (spell 43) intended to prevent his head from being 'taken from him'; very often, in our exploration of tombs, we observe that broken heads of mummies had been linked to the bodies by means of palm stalks. Moreover, Ranke observed that thick layers of salt had been deposited between the shrouds. This was obviously the customary practice. R. Grilletto observed it also in the tombs of Antinoopolis, where he discovered 120 corpses wrapped in shrouds, covered with thick layers of salt.

One mummy from Antinoopolis, which is kept at the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire at Brussels, has been recently studied and X-rayed.[22]

[22] Francot et al. 1999.

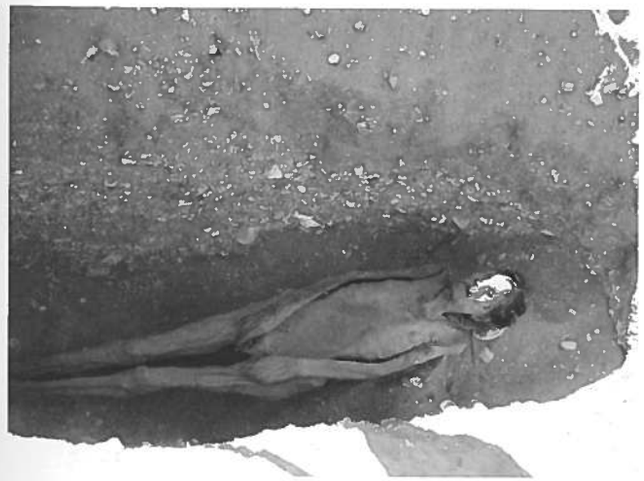

Figure 8.6 Mummy ED.W102.1, Christian necropolis of El Deir, fifth century AD; photo F. Dunand.

Dated to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century from an inscription on its shoes, this mummy is well known as the 'embroideress', because tools used for embroidery were found in the tomb. It seems to be rather well preserved, with intact skin and nails (**Fig**. 8.8). However, our colleagues at Brussels think she had not been 'mummified', but desiccated spontaneously by 'long-lasting contact with warm sand'. That seems to me quite impossible, as this woman was dressed in three thick dresses and a coat (or shawl), a bonnet upon her head. It is not obvious how she could have had any contact with sand, unless it was a deliberate treatment (before the clothing was put on her).

In other cases, information about the treatment of bodies is rather scanty. This is the case with those which were found near the Monastery of St Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahari. Winlock notes that they were buried in shallow graves, sometimes inside reused coffins, and that they were 'atrocities of hideousness'.

Obviously, during the Coptic period, there were differences in the treatment used for the dead. In the Christian cemetery recently discovered at El Deir, some corpses are well preserved, wrapped in beautiful decorated shrouds, with traces of salt between the layers of tissue (**Figs**. 8.6–7); others were simply desiccated, their skin looking like parchment: it seems that their bodies had not been treated at all. Could this be considered as a step towards the abandonment of any treatment at all of the dead

Figure 8.7 Mummy ED.W97.1, Christian necropolis of El Deir, fifth century AD; photo F. Dunand.

body? It is difficult to support such a view; these differences could be due to social condition, poor people being unable to afford the expenses of mummification.

Some authors have wanted to draw conclusions about religious affiliation on the basis of the position of the dead. It seems that at some sites they were positioned systematically with the head towards the west (at Saqqara, at the Monastery of Epiphanius, at Douch). At Fag el Gamous, however, where in earlier burials bodies were disposed with the head towards the west, later burials were placed with the head towards the east. Moreover, it is clear that in many cemeteries there was not any general plan for positioning the tombs.

From this evidence, we must conclude that in Egypt between the fourth and the seventh century, most people, clerics as well as laymen, continued to consider it very important to preserve the dead body from decay. Christian authorities themselves could share this view, as appears from the testament of bishop Abraham of Hermonthis, written about AD 610, who wanted to be buried 'according to the customs of the land'.[23] It is clear that preservation of the dead body could fit with Christian beliefs about the resurrection. During the first centuries of the Christian era, the question of rebirth 'with the body' or 'without the body' was discussed. These discussions appear in the first letter by Paul to the Christians at Corinth (I Cor. 15:35–54),

[23] *P.Lond.* I 77.57–9; Krause 1983: 87.

Figure 8.8 Mummy called 'the embroidress', Antinoopolis, fourth century AD, Brussels, Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire.

but his answer is not clear: 'a psychic body has been sowed, a spiritual body rises (σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν)'. And then: 'the dead will rise incorruptible (ἄφθαρτοι), ourselves, we shall be transformed'. From these ambiguous expressions, it was not impossible to conclude that it was better to preserve the dead body from corruption, waiting for a resurrection that many thought very near.

An inscription found upon a bandage coming from Oxyrhynchos, probably dating from the fifth or sixth century, proves that its owner believed in the resurrection of the body and the necessity to maintain it intact. It says: λέγει Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν τεθαμμένον ὃ οὐκ ἐγερθήσεται, 'Jesus says, "nothing is buried which shall not rise."'[24]

I would like to quote some lines from the *Story of Joseph the Carpenter*, for which two Coptic versions and one Arabic have been preserved; the original Greek text is to be dated to the fourth century AD.[25] It relates how, when Joseph died, Jesus washed his body, anointed him with perfumed oils, then put his hand upon his heart, pronouncing formulae intended to preserve the body from decay: 'let the stinking smell of death never touch you . . . let corruption never flow out from your body . . . let the hair upon your head never wither . . .' As M. Krause and S. Morenz have justly noticed, these formulae could be considered as a kind of substitute for mummification.

Moreover, Coptic stories about martyrs insist upon the fact that after terrible tortures and mutilations the corpses of these holy men remained intact. When the dead bodies of the holy Cyrus and John were unearthed at Alexandria to be transferred to Canopus, they were found 'intact and sweet-smelling'. D. Frankfurter says rightly: 'Coptic tradition clearly put a premium on the whole corpse, preserved in intimate connection with the living.'[26]

Nevertheless, there was in Egypt, during the same period, a strong opposition to practices aiming to preserve the body. It is possible to find a first trace of this opposition in the *Vita Antonii*. While Antony lay dying in his cell near the Red Sea, he ordered his disciples, gathered around him, 'not to carry his body to Egypt'; he wanted to be buried immediately after his death. The text refers precisely to a custom well attested in Egypt, which consisted of keeping the mummified body of the dead inside the house (probably waiting for his tomb to be ready). Antony did not want this custom to be applied to himself, principally because he refused to allow his body

[24] Puech 1978: 59–62.
[25] French translation of the Société des Bollandistes, in *Évangiles apocryphes*, ed. F. Quéré (Paris 1983), pp. 96–114.
[26] Frankfurter 1998: 44.

to be venerated; he asserts that such veneration is 'not right nor sanctified'. Immediate burial probably signified that no kind of treatment should be applied to the body. For Athanasius, if miracles were produced by Antony after his death, they had nothing to do with his body: it was only his memory, his example which were needed by believers. The same Athanasius, in his *Festal Letters*, written about AD 369–70, condemns practices concerning the bodies of 'holy martyrs'. Believers are accused of 'defiling themselves with the dead'. Adepts of Meletius are reproached for preserving (and even unearthing) bodies in order to venerate them. Later on, the same opinion is presented by Shenoute, a fighting character and prolific writer, whose influence over the Coptic church was to be huge.[27] In his writings, there are violent diatribes against some practices around the tombs of 'holy martyrs'. It is impious, he says, to sing songs, drink, eat, and laugh around these tombs (and, of course, to fornicate); it is impious, too, to search for their skeletons or bones: 'our fathers, who died before us, ordered that nobody should be able to find their bodies'. Shenoute taught that faith in the resurrection had nothing to do with preservation of the body, even if he believed in resurrection 'with the body'. There is a curious dialogue between him and a man (whose name is unknown) who taught that Christians would arise with another body, the present one no longer existing, because it would become earth. Shenoute calls him insane: 'It is this body which shall arise on the day of resurrection.'[28] However, in a commentary upon Ezekiel's vision, where he claims that we shall arise bodily, he describes with many details the dead bodies which are dissolved and putrefied in the ground, whose limbs are dismembered. It is clear that he does not contemplate preservation of dead bodies as something normal, even less as something desirable.

At about the same time, another great Christian thinker, Augustine of Hippo, taught that resurrection was not related to the preservation of dead bodies: God had permitted the bodies of the holy martyrs to be completely destroyed, as was obvious in the case of the martyrs at Lyon. But it is probable that in Coptic Egypt, as in other Christian societies, most people thought that it was essential to put dead bodies in good, secure tombs to grant them resurrection. Earth was assimilated to the motherly womb, inside which the dead would be born again. Hence the so frequent habit, in many Christian countries, to bury the dead *ad sanctos*, near the tombs of holy men and martyrs, so as to obtain their protection against anybody liable to disturb their grave.[29] We must note, however, that strong condemnation

[27] Amélineau 1907–14: cf. I.199–200, 213, 375–6.
[28] Amélineau 1907–14: I.191–2.
[29] Duval 1988.

of customs aiming to preserve the dead body from decay was not widespread amongst Christian authorities in Egypt, as it seems, beyond the fourth or fifth century. Does that mean that from this time on such polemics became less necessary?

In any case, the writings which constituted the scriptural canon were so ambiguous that it was difficult to use them to support a choice between the refusal to preserve the dead body and the decision to preserve it. Nevertheless, many texts which were used in Egypt by Christians conveyed negative images of the body, which were in complete opposition to the idea of the necessity of care for the corpse. I refer to the gnostic or semi-gnostic treatises which were preserved in the collection of writings from Nag Hammadi. The most explicit doctrine about the body can be found in the *Book of Thomas the Contender*, a dialogue between the resurrected Jesus and his brother Judas Thomas.[30] When Thomas questions him, Jesus answers: the body is bestial. 'Just as the body of the beasts perishes', the body of man must decay and perish. So 'the vessel of the flesh will dissolve'. The body is a prison; man must pray to come forth from this bondage and become 'perfect'. Similar ideas are developed in the *Dialogue of the Saviour*.[31] Questioned about salvation, Jesus says that even those who have received baptism are still burdened by existence in the world. When they 'come forth from the corruption of the flesh', at the hour of death, when 'the works of femaleness' will be destroyed, they will find the 'place of life'. It is clear that 'body' means corruption, burden, prison. Quite negative images appear too in the *Authentikos Logos*, or *Authoritative Teaching*: 'the body came from lust, and lust came from material substance'.[32]

How far these ideas influenced Christian communities in Egypt is difficult to say. Men like Shenoute struggled against gnostic doctrines, but it seems that he himself was impregnated with a quite negative image of the body – which was widespread, at that period, among many Christian authorities. If we read the many stories about the holy men who retired to the deserts (the stories we find in the *Apophthegmata*), we are amazed by tales about the horrific treatments they inflicted on themselves: they fasted, they stayed awake during many nights, they exposed themselves to maximum heat until they were completely exhausted. Apa Makarios, during Lent, remained standing in his cell, without eating or drinking anything, except, on Sundays, some crude leaves of cabbage. Apa Dorotheos, who chose the hottest hours of the day to gather stones in the desert, in the

[30] *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. M. Robinson, Codex II.7.
[31] Ibid., Codex III.5. [32] Ibid., Codex VI.3.

insufferable heat, said, speaking of his body: 'I kill him, because he kills me.'[33] No doubt these men were driven by a strong fear of the body to these mad competitions in asceticism.

A DELICATE BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION

There is no reason to suppose that during the first centuries of our era funerary practices among Christians deviated from the old customs. We must remember that for a long time, in many families, there were probably people who continued to observe the traditional religion, and others who were converted to the new one. That is, at any rate, the picture given in the sources. Although the parents of Antony were, according to Athanasius' *Life*, already converted, those of Pachomius are said in his *Life* to have been still 'pagan'. A text of the Coptic *Life of Pachomius* relates that, one day, his parents took him with them to go to the temple and make offerings to the gods ('demons', says the text); they wanted to give him some of the wine they offered to drink, but he refused.[34] Another holy man relates that his father was a priest of the 'idols'; when he was young, he was accustomed to go with him to the temple where he fulfilled his duty towards his god.

Many texts from this period (I mean documentary texts as well as literary or hagiographic ones) give a strong impression that, between Christian and non-Christian people, during the first centuries of our era, probably till the end of the fourth century, there was never any sign of animosity. In short, as an archaeologist who worked on the necropolis at Bagawat has written, 'the members of the old and the new religion worked and lived side by side'.[35] They shared their cemeteries: at Hawara, Karara, and Bagawat, Christian tombs were found beside others which were obviously 'pagan'. We must not be surprised that funerary practices should be common to both communities. If all members of your family had been mummified, it would be difficult to give up this custom, even if you have heard clerics preaching against it.

M. Krause noticed many similarities between Christian funerary customs and the old Egyptian ones.[36] Christians as well as 'pagans' were rather worried about their burial; some of them prepared their tombs while still alive; others entrusted their heirs with the care of their burial. To quote

[33] Palladius, *Histoire Lausiaque*, 2.2. [34] Lefort 1984.
[35] W. Hauser, 'The Necropolis in the Kharga Oasis', *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 27 (1932): 38–50.
[36] Krause 1983.

a will dated AD 723 (*P.KRU* 68.64–6): 'When I leave my body, it will be above all your duty to take care of the clothing of my body and of my sacred offering'. Bishop Abraham of Hermonthis instructs his successor at the head of the Monastery of Phoibammon to bury him 'according to my condition and fame' (κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ὄψιν καὶ ὑπόληψιν). The custom of women wailing during the ritual of funeral, so often represented upon the paintings of tombs and the funerary papyri since the New Kingdom, lasted until a very late period. Shenoute and other Christian authorities preached against this custom; decrees by synods tried to forbid it, but it was in vain. It is interesting to notice that the burial of nuns had to be carried out by monks: perhaps because they were afraid of a propensity among women to maintain the old custom of wailing? Another traditional practice observed by Christians consisted in depositing inside the tombs offerings and objects of everyday life. In the tombs at Karara, Ranke counted many jewels, made of silver, copper, or faience, needles, combs, spoons, boxes, bits of furniture made of wood, fragments of pottery and glass, woven mats, and musical instruments like flutes and castanets. The Christian tomb we explored at Douch was poor, but there was inside a small necklace (probably for a child), a frog-lamp, some shards of common pottery, and a small broom made of stalks of esparto grass. One could even find in Christian graves funerary texts. In a tomb at Akhmim, there was a manuscript of Peter's Apocalypse; it contains a quite detailed account of the last days, judgment, hell, and the punishment of sinners: a kind of Book of the Dead. As to the custom of parents and friends going to the tomb at fixed times and sharing a meal with the dead, this is attested in Christian as well as 'pagan' contexts.[37]

In other parts of the Byzantine world, similar practices took place (particularly the funerary meal). Archaeologists have pointed out that practices related to very old traditions were maintained in Greek cemeteries dated between the fourth and seventh century AD, including pouring liquids on the tomb, putting a coin in the hand of the dead, and depositing pottery vessels inside the grave.[38]

In contrast with this widespread element of continuity of practice, interesting information coming from Coptic funerary inscriptions seems to offer ideas about death and the afterlife rather different from the older ones. A formula which appears very often on 'pagan' inscriptions, the so-called 'appel aux vivants', can be found, with some differences, in Coptic inscriptions, when the dead speaks to the passer-by and asks him to read the inscription

[37] Papaconstantinou 2001: 320–1. [38] Sodini 1977.

and to pray for him. However, in these inscriptions, the phraseology and images are borrowed for the most part from the Old Testament: life is a perilous sea, the dead has dried like grass, his days are like shadow and smoke, death is the punishment of sin. For the living as for the dead, death means fear and sorrow. This feeling was not absent from 'pagan' funerary inscriptions during the late period; but it seems that it becomes stronger and more frequent in Christian epitaphs. When older texts advised living people to 'make merry today' before going to the other world, Coptic texts disparage earthly life in comparison to the life to come.

Some motifs which appear in Coptic funerary inscriptions can in fact be compared with specific expressions of the Byzantine ritual.[39] Human life compared with shadow or smoke appears in the *Euchologion*, as well as the theme of the irreparable loss of senses (quite contrary to Egyptian tradition), or the habit of comparing death to a thief who comes to abduct and destroy. Opposition between the body, which must return to dust, and the soul, which is intended to have access to God, can be found in Coptic inscriptions as in the Byzantine ritual. It is obvious that many 'pagan' funerary texts from the late period contrasted the body, which is deposited in its grave, and the 'spiritual' elements, which are able to come and go between the two worlds; but none of them would claim that body must become dust.

The custom of building churches inside cemeteries in order to celebrate liturgies for the dead, which is attested in the Balkan region from the end of the fourth century on,[40] was adopted in Egypt, but possibly a little later, as it appears from the Christian cemetery at Bagawat (Kharga Oasis), which is dated fifth–sixth century AD.[41] Information about funerals coming from Christian Egypt indicates a rather close relationship with Byzantine ritual, even if the latter placed more stress, as it seems, upon hymns and music. Part of the ceremony was carried out in the house of the dead, at a church, and the last one near the tomb. It consisted mostly in reciting psalms, singing hymns, praying, and reading texts from the Old and New Testaments.[42] It seems, however, that the Coptic funerary ritual is known from rather late sources; and funerary inscriptions themselves are not always easily dated. In any event, we must observe that information about funerary practices in the Byzantine world is rather scant, as far as the laity is concerned; for the most part it concerns monastic circles or the imperial environment.[43]

[39] Cramer 1941: 6, 63ff. [40] Snively 1983: 57. [41] Fakhry 1951. [42] Cramer 1941: 57ff., 196–7.
[43] Abrahamse 1983: 59–60. I have had no access to Matzerath 1939 and Rusch 1941.

Christians in Egypt thus continued for a long time to observe many old customs, of which mummification was one of the most important. But they were taught new ideas about the life to come, and they learned gradually to think differently about what would become of the body after death – and perhaps what kind of treatment they therefore needed to apply to the dead. I think that Christian authorities at first turned a blind eye to mummification (and many other customs), all the more so since it was not inherently opposed to the beliefs about the resurrection 'with the body'. This is hardly surprising, for when a new religion spreads, one of its main problems is to maintain a balance between old and new. No religious system could allow itself to bring entirely into disrepute the widespread practices of a previous system without running a serious risk of unsettling believers. Old traditions in Egypt were very strong; it would probably have been dangerous, and futile, to try to upset them completely. On the other hand, a new religion faces an absolute necessity of asserting its specific nature, and this can be done only by emphasizing its differences with regard to older creeds and practices. Men like Antony, Athanasius, or Shenoute were eager to affirm their creed as a new one, higher than the old one. In fact, I think that the Christian church, in Egypt, concerning death and the dead, was trapped by conflicting requirements, conflicting images of the body and what should become of it. It is therefore hardly amazing if we are faced with contradictory instructions concerning the care suitable for the dead. This contradiction is obvious in many texts dated to the fourth or early fifth century. We can take it for granted that in a later period, when the new religion was firmly established, it was less necessary to fight old customs. Coptic Egypt preserved until a late period the specific character of its funerary practices; nevertheless, it is probable that they were more and more integrated into the general customs of the Byzantine world.

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PART II

Government, environments, society, and economy

CHAPTER 9

Alexandria in the fourth to seventh centuries

Zsolt Kiss

In the city of Alexandria, the fourth century began in 297, when Diocletian's troops crushed the revolt of Domitius Domitianus. This event was commemorated by a monumental honorific column in Aswan pink granite, traditionally known as 'Pompey's Pillar',[1] erected at the summit of the Serapeum hill and visible throughout the city. A very worn dedicatory inscription is visible on the socle, recording the dedication in 298 by the prefect of Egypt Aelius Publius of a statue of the emperor atop the column.[2] It is possible that some fragments of a porphyry statue, found at the foot of the column but now lost, belonged to this statue.[3] Despite the inscription's description of the emperor as the 'tutelary god of Alexandria', the city suffered greatly from the repression of Domitianus' revolt, and part of the population was deported.

In the history of the city, however, Diocletian was remembered above all for the persecutions of Christians that followed his decree of the year 303.[4] By this time Christianity was already well established in the city. The Christian community was headed during the 'Little Peace' before the persecutions by the patriarch Theonas (282–300), whose name was traditionally given to the first cathedral of the city, the 'Church of Theonas', later transformed into the 'Mosque of a Thousand Columns'.[5] The bulk of the persecutions fell under the patriarch Peter (300–11), who himself suffered martyrdom, for Diocletian's successor, Galerius, and his Caesar, Maximinus Daia, who was responsible for the government of Egypt, continued the policy of repression against the Christians. As a result, there are no indisputable material traces of Christian Alexandria from this period. One possible survival is a tomb to the west of the Serapeum, called the 'Wescher Tomb', decorated with paintings.[6] These represent the wedding at Cana,

[1] Pensabene 1993: 39–40. [2] Kayser 1994: 52–4, no. 15. [3] Tkaczow 1993: 285–6, nos. 269–269A.
[4] It is striking that the Era of the Martyrs used in the Coptic religious calendar does not start from this date but from 284, that is, from Diocletian's accession to power.
[5] Gascou 1998: 37–42. [6] Tkaczow 1993: 65–6, no. 16; Venit 2002: 183–6, figs. 158–9.

set in a countryside depicted in Hellenistic style. It is difficult to date the reuse by Christians of a part of the Gabbari necropolis, a reoccupation attested by the numerous painted crosses inside the old tombs.[7]

Diocletian and his successors do not seem to have done much to restore Alexandria's splendour. No building can be attributed to them, and the only indication even of the adornment of any public space is a large porphyry statue of an enthroned sovereign – indeed, the largest known ancient statue in porphyry! – found not far from the main east–west street (the 'Via Canopica'), now in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (**Fig.** 9.1).[8] The style and decoration of the throne, despite the absence of the emperor's head, allow it to be attributed to one of the tetrarchs. Rather than Diocletian himself, however, I think it probably represents Galerius.[9] It has also been attributed by some scholars to Constantine.[10] They have even supposed that it was part of a familial group, along with another porphyry statue found in Alexandria, perhaps not far from the enthroned statue, and now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.[11] This statue, which is unfortunately headless like the other, presents a standing person wearing a tunic, with a rich belt. Considering its lesser height, those who attribute the statue to a familial group are led to see in it one of the sons of Constantine.[12] Although this argument does not seem convincing to me, it is certain that Alexandria's situation changed with Constantine's ascent to power.

Once Christianity was accorded favoured status under Constantine, the patriarch Alexander (312–28) enlarged the Church of Theonas and consecrated it to the Virgin Mary. Similarly, he is credited with the transformation of the temple of Saturn, not far from the Caesareum, into a church dedicated to St Michael.[13] During this peaceful period in the reign of Constantine (324–37), the entire city was probably rebuilt after the damage caused by Diocletian's activity. But there was also damage from an earthquake in 319/20 to be dealt with as well.[14]

We have so far, however, no actual traces identifiable with the building activity of this period. Rather, it is to a slightly later period that we must look. Thanks to the Polish excavations at Kom el-Dikka, we have some sense of what part of the city centre looked like towards the middle of the fourth century.[15] In this quarter, south of the Via Canopica and between the

[7] Sabottka 1983: 202–3, pl. 43; Tkaczow 1993: 56, no. 4. [8] Tkaczow 1993: 286–7, no. 271.
[9] Kiss 1984: 101, 109. [10] Delbrueck 1932: 96–8, pls. 40–1; L'Orange 1984: 119, pl. 46.
[11] Kiss 1984: 102; Tkaczow 1993: 287, no. 272.
[12] Delbrueck 1932: 108–9, pl. 49; L'Orange 1984: 139, pl. 47, b.
[13] Badawy 1978: 26; Heinen 1991: 102.
[14] Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, trans. C. Mango and R. Scott (Oxford 1997) 29.
[15] Tkaczow 2002: 134–6, plan XII.

Figure 9.1 Seated porphyry statue, Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum inv. no. 5934 (Galerius).

north–south streets R4 and R5 in El Falaki's plan, on the levelled remains of a quarter of luxurious villas from the first and second centuries, was built a 'public recreation complex' in the period of the sons of Constantine. The core of this complex was public baths of 'imperial' type.[16] The parts built in baked brick for the heated rooms (*caldarium*, *tepidarium*), along with their

[16] Kołątaj 1992.

system of underground heating, are better preserved than the unheated part (*frigidarium*) and the entry façade opening out onto street R4, because the stonework of the latter has been dismantled down to ground level. W. Kołątaj dates these baths to the time of Gratian (375–8), but in my view this date should be pushed back to the reign of Constantius II (337–60). To supply water for the baths, water-castle type cisterns were built on the south side, with the water drawn from a branch of the canal coming from the Nile. The massive body of the baths was flanked by two columned porticoes with granite columns, leading to a monumental portico running north–south. The eastern boundary of this street was the formidable circuit wall of the 'recreation complex' which bordered on its southern edge an odeon open to the sky with a hemicycle of fifteen (or seventeen) rows of marble seats.[17]

By contrast, on the east side of street R4, facing the baths and cisterns, a quarter of artisans' houses was created on the ruins of luxurious villas.[18] They opened on to the street or a common court with a well.[19] Despite their modest standard, traditional elements like the triclinium with pavement in *opus sectile* (House G)[20] or a modest, four-column, peristyle with basin (House E)[21] are found.

Not far from the imperial baths, to the north-west, was found a porphyry statue now in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin.[22] The person depicted is clothed in a *chlamys* and *paludamentum*, with a sword-belt, but again unfortunately without surviving head. The recent discovery of the bottom of the statue, which had quite rightly been attributed to one of the sons of Constantine,[23] has allowed the recognition of Constantius II.[24] This imperial statue certainly decorated a public space in the centre of the city and shows that although, in my view, the Alexandrian porphyry workshop had followed the court of Galerius and Constantine II to the west,[25] a part of it continued to work in Alexandria. Another proof of this development may be found in a porphyry sarcophagus cover in the Graeco-Roman Museum of Alexandria.[26] Its decoration with masculine and feminine heads wearing garlands is still in the tradition of sarcophagi from Asia Minor, but the rigid and precise style is the same as that of the sarcophagi of Constantia and Helena at Rome, which have always been attributed to Alexandrian artists.

[17] Kiss (forthcoming). [18] Rodziewicz 1984. [19] Rodziewicz 1984: 128–45.
[20] Rodziewicz 1984: 173–6. [21] Rodziewicz 1984: 177–93.
[22] Tkaczow 1993: 287, no. 273; Effenberger 1996: 80–1, no. 13.
[23] L'Orange 1984: 129–30, pl. 46, c. [24] Kiss 1984: 102, figs. 260–1.
[25] Kiss 2000: 47–50. [26] Adriani 1961: 32, no. 37, figs. 90–4; Koch and Sichtermann 1982: 578.

Through a whole series of reigns starting under Constantine and spanning nearly a half-century, Athanasius held the office of patriarch of Alexandria (328–73). This was a period of often violent public confrontations in the city, some of them between a now triumphant Christianity and a pagan religion mostly on the defensive, despite a brief respite under Julian. Libanius (*Progymnasmata* 27) still mentions the Tychaion functioning in the centre of Alexandria and the statues of Alexander and the Ptolemies still in place. In 359 he notes (*Or.* 49.12) that the Mouseion, with the Library, had been transferred to the Serapeum, a remaining bastion of pagan religion and culture.[27] He also asserts that he had seen the tomb of Alexander the Great, but not long afterwards his pupil John Chrysostom (*Or.* 26.12) suggests that it had been destroyed.

During his reign Athanasius had numerous churches built, spurred not only by growth in the Christian population but by the need for the 'orthodox' patriarchate to replace those held by Arians. The most prestigious was that built in 370 near the Agora, which took the name of the patriarch and was later converted into the El-Attarin mosque.[28] The only remains of the church are two columns of gray granite, today standing in front of the University of Alexandria, with relief decoration of crosses on the shafts (**Fig.** 9.2).[29] Of particular interest was the fate of the Caesareum. Transformed into a church, it was destroyed by order of Constantius II, then rebuilt in 363. But on 21 July 365 a great earthquake, accompanied by a tidal wave, damaged the entire city and engulfed in the sea a part of the shore with the so-called 'royal quarters'.[30] Almost as quickly as it was rebuilt, the church was sacked by the pagans in 366 (showing clearly that they still had a significant place among the Alexandrian population). Finally, in 368 Athanasius succeeded in instituting Christian worship in the former temple of the pagan state cult.

Pagan resistance in the population nonetheless remained lively. Athanasius' Arian rival, George, tried to build a church in 376–7 on the site of an abandoned Mithraeum. The Christians were first shocked by the discovery of human skeletons, but then the local population arose against the profanation of the former sanctuary of Mithras, and the Arian patriarch had to halt the construction.[31] The patriarch's zeal against pagan cults was vigorous; he launched a military action against the Serapeum, once again provoking an uprising of the population. He was also the instigator of the destruction of the altar of Juno Moneta in the mint near the

[27] McKenzie et al. 2004: 73–121, esp. 104–10. [28] Badawy 1978: 26.
[29] Debbane 1967: 81–4, pl. I; Tkaczow 1993: 293–4 no. 286p.
[30] Bousquet 1984: 437–45; Kelly 2004: 141–67. [31] Chuvin 1991: 47–8; Turcan 2000: 119.

Figure 9.2 Column from 'Church of Theonas' (?) in front of present-day University of Alexandria.

Caesareum.[32] Detested equally by Athanasius' partisans, the Jews, and the pagans, George was finally lynched by the mob. According to the anonymous pamphlet *Expositio totius mundi*, drawn up around 359–60, at this period paganism was still very much alive in Alexandria.[33]

[32] Heinen 1991: 99; Haas 1997: 287–8. [33] Heinen 1991: 99.

Towards the end of the fourth century, Alexandria remained one of the metropoleis of the Roman empire. It seems to have largely recovered from these destructions and catastrophes. The major monuments were still standing, some of the temples – above all the great Serapeum – were still open, other temples were taken over for Christian worship, and new churches had been built.[34] A summary description, the *Notitia urbis Alexandrinae*,[35] counted 47,790 houses, 393 temples and chapels, 1561 baths, 945 inns, and 456 porticoes. Of all this little remains except for the structures at Kom el-Dikka.

The reign of Theodosius I, a fervent Christian who ordered the final closing of the pagan temples, coincided with the period of activity of the Alexandrian patriarch Theophilus (385–412). He was no less ardent in the struggle against what remained of paganism. He seized the Tychaion and the temple of Dionysos to use as churches, but his most daring action was the capture of the great Serapeum.[36] Rufinus (11.23) recounts how the crowd of Christians sacked the temple and smashed the cult statue of Serapis, and the so-called Alexandrian Chronicle gives us a symbolic image of the patriarch demolishing the temple and crushing the statue of the god (**Fig.** 9.3).[37] The church then took possession of the site, placing a martyr shrine there in 402 and then, under Honorius, also building there a church dedicated to St John the Baptist.[38] On the island of Pharos, traditionally a quarter occupied by Egyptians, the patriarch built a church dedicated to St Raphael.[39]

The triumph over paganism also brought in its wake an emigration of some of the intellectual elite, including the famous poet Claudian, who made his way to a successful career in Italy. The patriarchs' bellicosity was, however, directed as much at the Jews as at the pagans. The Jewish community of Alexandria, after its decimation in the suppression of the revolt at the end of Trajan's reign and the start of that of Hadrian, had once again come to be of some importance.[40] It occupied an area near the Caesareum, and in this area a marble base, dated to the fourth–fifth century, was discovered from a statue (?) of a certain Rouna, probably a Jewish woman,[41] as well as a Greek inscription accompanied by a menorah on a marble plaque of the same period.[42]

In general, the chronology of the physical remains of this period is difficult to establish securely. Distinguishing what belongs to the fourth century from what was produced only in the fifth century is as difficult as it is to

[34] Cf. for a general description Haas 1997. [35] Fraser 1951: 103–8. [36] Haas 1997: 159–68.
[37] Hodjash 2002: 42 no. 10. [38] Badawy 1978: 26; Heinen 1991: 101. [39] Heinen 1991: 101.
[40] Haas 1997: 109–20. [41] Tkaczow 1993: 290 no. 278. [42] Tkaczow 1993: 290 no. 279.

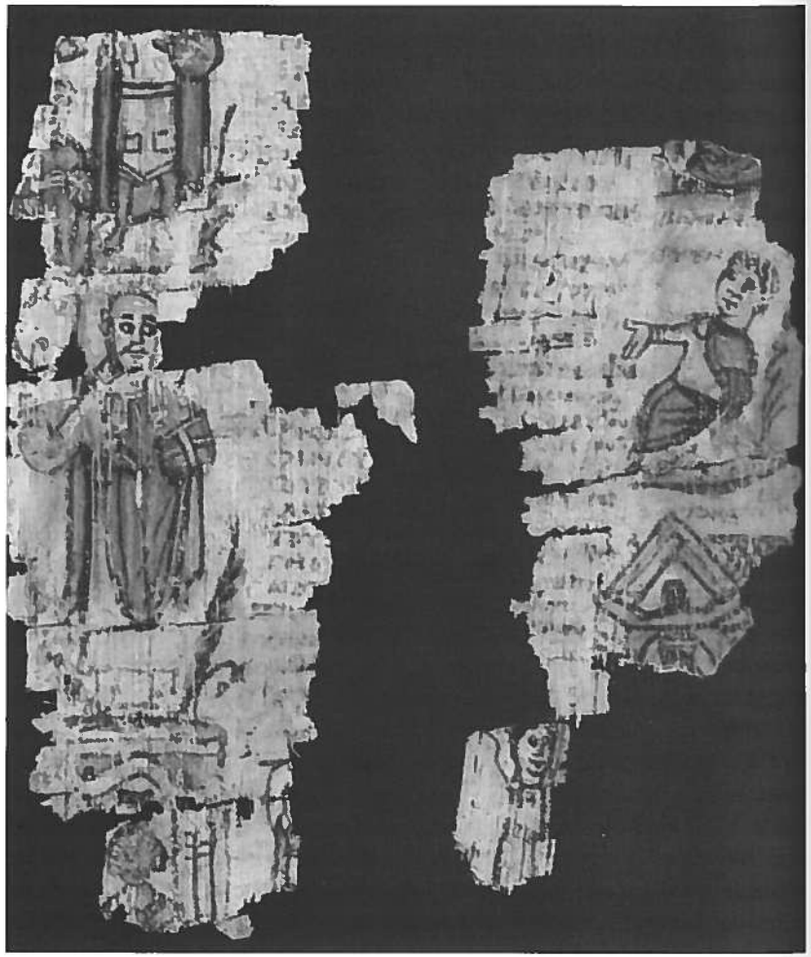

Figure 9.3 Illustration from the Alexandrian 'Weltchronik' in Moscow, Pushkin Museum: Patriarch Theophilus in the destroyed Serapeum.

tell what monuments of the sixth century actually go back to the fifth. This archaeological uncertainty may also, in my view, be the result of a genuine urbanistic decline in the period.[43] We find no trace of any large-scale public investments, and only a Latin inscription testifies to a statue of Valentinian I or II near the main east–west artery of Alexandria.[44] The

[43] Kiss 1993: 261–4. [44] Tkaczow 1993: 289 no. 277.

streets and their approaches continued to function, but inside the blocks little hills of garbage (*kopriai*) piled up, on which perched the hovels of the poorer population.[45] Such hills have been identified east of street R4, near street R5,[46] to the south of street L2; and still further to the south, along street L3 between streets R2 and R3, there was an abandoned zone.[47]

The patriarch Cyril (412–44) continued his uncle's work in struggling against the remnants of paganism. It was during his time, in 415, that the lynching of the eminent intellectual Hypatia took place, the result above all of the personal struggle between the patriarch and the governor Orestes.[48] The religious struggle continued to leave some space for pagan observance; thus in 436, according to Theophanes, the joyous pagan festival of the Nile was celebrated in the theatre of Alexandria. An interesting witness to the fears of the pagan elite is offered by a deposit of sculptures discovered at Sidi Bishr.[49] This lot of representations of pagan divinities (Aphrodite, Eros, Harpocrates, Dionysos, Hygia, Ares, the Nile) probably came from a rich pagan residence and was intentionally hidden during the fifth century (**Fig.** 9.4). Such deposits from this period have also been found at Tomis, Carthage, and Nea Paphos.

Towards the end of the fifth century, the patriarch Peter Mongos (477–90) incited some monks to pillage the temple of Isis at Menouthis, near Canopus. This marked the end point of the publicly visible existence of pagan cult in the area of Alexandria, and on the site of the temple a church dedicated to St John the Baptist was constructed.[50] The Christians had already destroyed the Serapeum at Canopus a century earlier, in 391, and on its site was built the famous Monastery of Metanoia.[51] To the west of Alexandria, similarly on the remains of a pagan sanctuary, the Monastery of Enaton was built,[52] source of the famous marble bas-relief with an image of St Menas[53] and marble fragments of grillwork.[54] This saint's pilgrimage centre also became a centre of attraction in this period, and the pilgrimage route from outside Egypt of necessity passed through the port of Alexandria, while traffic from Egypt itself would travel by the Nile, then the Alexandria canal towards Lake Mareotis. On the banks of the lake flourished the transit port of Marea, currently being excavated by a Polish mission. Its remains, to be dated to the late fifth to early seventh century, include a large basilica, spectacularly located on a promontory, shops, and public baths (**Fig.** 9.5).[55]

[45] Adriani 1963: 225. [46] Rodziewicz 1984: 252–6. [47] Kiss 1993: 263.
[48] Chuvin 1991: 90–4; Dzielska 1993. [49] Gąssowska 1977: 99–118; Hannestad 1994: 123–6.
[50] Bernand 1970: 208–13. [51] Bernand 1970: 201–4; Gascou 1991b: 608–11.
[52] Heinen 1991: 101; Gascou 1991a: 954–8. [53] Wessel 1964: fig. 12.
[54] Pensabene 1993: 538–9, nos. 1029–30.
[55] Rodziewicz 1983: 199–208; Babraj and Szymanska 2004: 21–8.

Figure 9.4 A sculpture from Sidi Bishr in Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum: Aphrodite with Eros.

The canal to the lake was renovated under Theodosius, according to an inscribed base.[56]

The supply of water remained one of the city's major problems in this period. One part of the supply was a large number of cisterns, of which a

[56] Bernand 1970: 335–49; Tkaczow 1993: 292 no. 283.

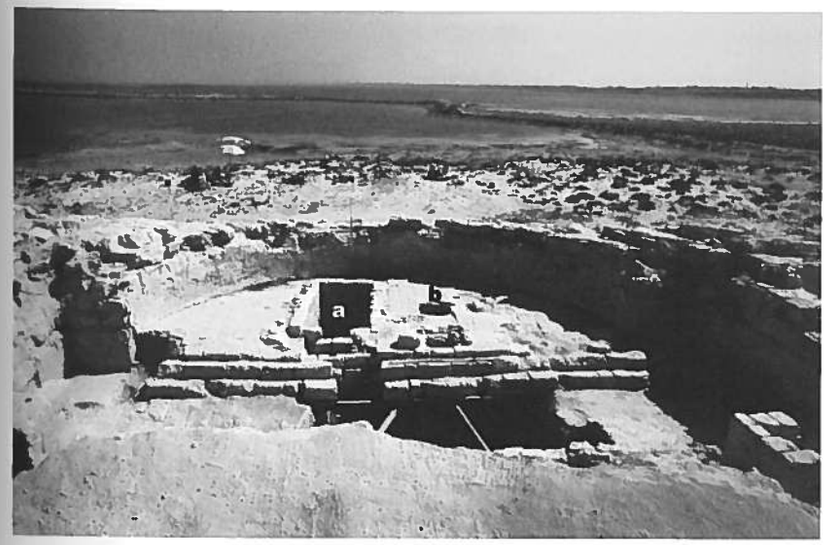

Figure 9.5 Marea, Basilica.

census is currently being carried out.[57] Most are simply cut into the rock, without decoration and thus without any evidence to provide a dating. We may mention only the remains of a monastic establishment in the western suburbs of Alexandria, at Sidi Bishr, the foundation of which, thanks to archaeological evidence, can be situated in the fifth century, and use of which continued until the arrival of the Arabs.[58] Some larger cisterns, with multiple levels and built with reused ancient columns and capitals, like the el-Nabi cistern, certainly go back to the fifth or sixth century but remained in use during the Arab period.

At the end of the fifth and start of the sixth century, the area of Kom el-Dikka underwent significant change.[59] The public baths were renovated, perhaps as a result of damage caused by an earthquake (there were several of these, for example in 535 and then in 554)[60] or as a result of the suppression of civil disturbance, accompanied by fires and religious strife, in 537.[61] These may also have been the reasons for a complete transformation of the open-air odeon near the baths. The auditorium was extended to a horseshoe shape and reduced from sixteen or seventeen rows of seats to thirteen; most strikingly, the building was covered by a dome. It thus was

[57] Tkaczow 1993: *passim* (cf. index, p. 333, s.v. Cisterns); Empereur 1998: 125–44.
[58] Daszewski et al. 1990: 87–105. [59] Tkaczow 2002: 136–8, plan XIII.
[60] Taher 1998: 52. [61] Bury 1958: 342–3.

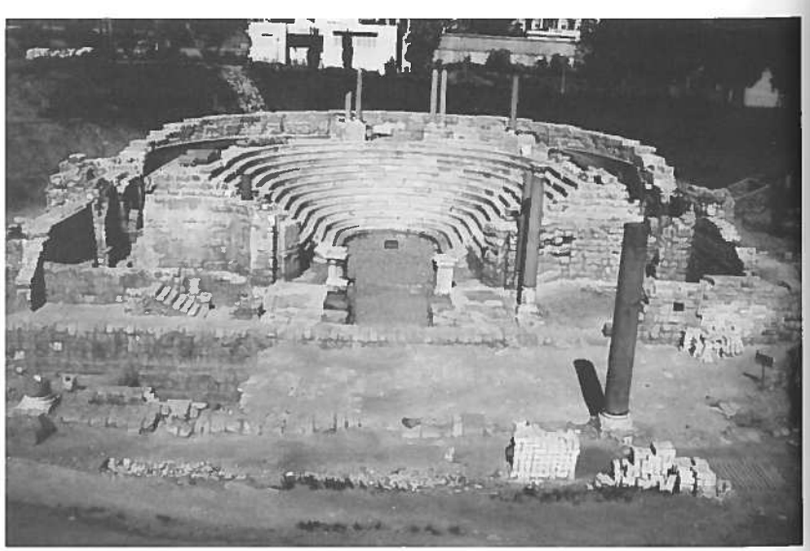

Figure 9.6 The so-called 'Roman Theatre' from Kom el-Dikka.

turned into a meeting hall, opening on to the monumental west portico and independent of the baths (**Fig.** 9.6).[62] The wide use of crosses inside laurel wreaths in the architectonic decoration of the rebuilt hall might make one think of meetings of a religious character.[63] The Corinthian capitals are of a type in common use in Alexandria,[64] whether imported or carved locally.[65] Among the very numerous capitals of this period, almost all reused from earlier buildings the original location of which is impossible to determine, there stands out a group of 'basket' capitals of large dimensions, certainly coming from a monumental church (**Fig.** 9.7).[66]

To the south-east of the area of Kom el-Dikka, along street L'2 on El Falaki's plan, the Polish archaeological mission has identified another set of public baths, more modest in dimensions than those of Kom el-Dikka, constructed in the fifth century and remaining in use until the seventh.[67] In the area between the 'imperial' baths and the new meeting hall there developed an entire complex of lecture rooms (**Fig.** 9.8). So far twenty of these rooms have been identified (the excavations are continuing).[68] They include three to five tiers of benches along three sides of a horseshoe

[62] Kiss (forthcoming). [63] Pensabene 1993: 472, nos. 697–9.
[64] Pensabene 1993: 236–9, nos. 553–63. [65] Pralong 2000: 81–101.
[66] Tkaczow 1993: 295–6 nos. 291–2; 297–8 nos. 296. [67] Rodziewicz 1979: 107–38.
[68] Cf. Majcherek (forthcoming).

Figure 9.7 A basket-capital, Alexandria, Graeco-Roman Museum, inv. no. 13475.

Figure 9.8 One of the auditoria newly discovered at Kom el-Dikka.

or rectangle, with a raised seat for the teacher at the head of the room. Each room could contain about twenty to thirty persons, and there is no doubt that their function was connected to teaching. During this period, Alexandria remained an important educational centre in the exact sciences (physics, mathematics) as well as in Neoplatonic philosophy (the so-called Third Sophistic), as, for example, the *Life of Severus* tells us (see Chapter 3 above, by Raffaella Cribiore, for education in this period).

To the east of street R4, facing the baths and cisterns, the quarter occupied by the houses of artisans kept its character throughout the sixth century but became ever more crowded. The artisans' workshops encroached onto street R4, reducing its breadth to 9.5 m, while a five-metre wide alley led into the interior of the block. The best-preserved house (House D), originally of a single storey, clustered seven rooms on the ground level around an internal courtyard (**Fig.** 9.9).[69] On one of the walls of this courtyard there was a kind of domestic shrine, with paintings representing an archangel and particularly the Virgin with the infant Jesus.[70] The abundant by-products and refuse from production found in these houses have made it possible to identify the inhabitants as glass-workers[71] and bone-workers.[72]

Alexandria had, of course, been well known for its glass artisanry for a long time,[73] but in this case it was instead a matter of simple mass-production of glassware. Similarly, the artisanal work on bone (rarely in ivory) consisted above all in the production of buttons or rods with simple mouldings. But there are also remains from production of small plaques with sculpted figural decoration. This artisanal activity was particularly flourishing in Alexandria in the fifth and sixth centuries, and we have numerous examples of such work. It is worth noting that in this society, which was already overwhelmingly Christian and hostile to paganism, the thematic material of these plaques which decorated furniture and other objects of everyday use was drawn mainly from Greek mythology: Dionysos, Silenos and maenads, Aphrodite, Hermes, Apollo, Tritons and Nereids.[74] The luxury objects of ivory, likewise, produced in Alexandria and exported throughout the Roman and former Roman world, were decorated with classical themes. A case in point is the pyxis now in the Wiesbaden Museum, dated to the sixth century and showing the Nile god with an Isiac celebration,[75] a plaque in the collection of Dumbarton Oaks representing Isis

[69] Rodziewicz 1984: 66–125, plan III; Haas 1997: 189–92.
[70] Rodziewicz 1984: 194–207, figs. 226–36.
[71] Rodziewicz 1984: 239–42. [72] Rodziewicz 1984: 243–5. [73] Mossakowska 2000: 56–8.
[74] Beckwith 1963: 48, figs. 25–8; Marangou 1976; Bonacasa Carra 1995: 279–82; Bonacasa Carra 2000: 352–60 and 472–5 nos. 84–90.
[75] Beckwith 1963: 48, figs. 31–4; Pinsker 1996: 199 no. 199.

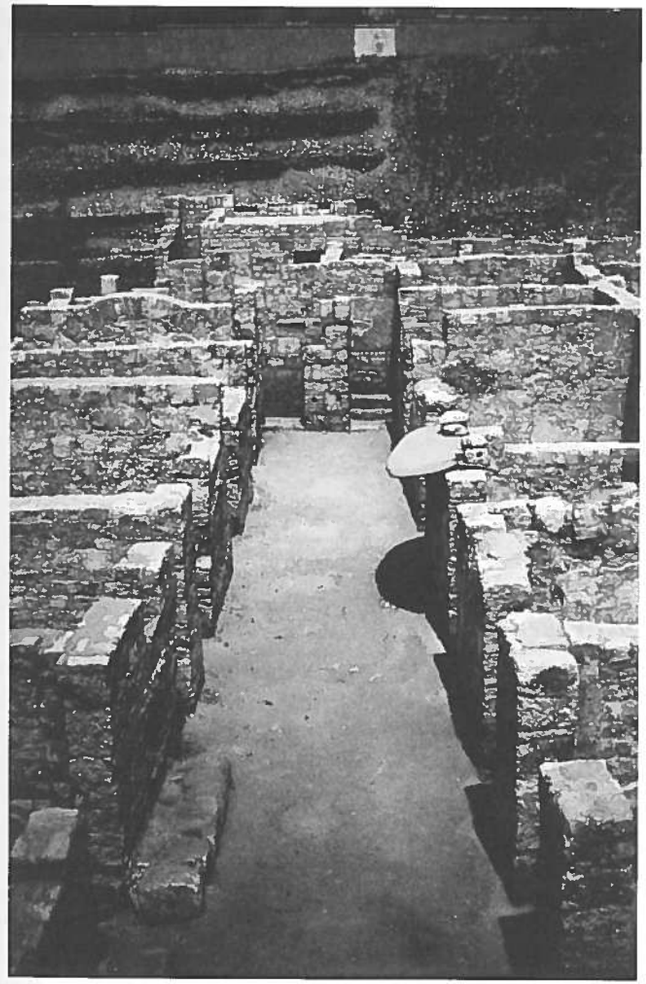

Figure 9.9 Kom el-Dikka, a general view of House D from the quarter east of street R4.

Pelagia (**Fig.** 9.10),[76] or one in the Aachen cathedral with the image of the personification of Alexandria or perhaps Isis.[77] This luxury production also had to take account of a very fervent Christian clientele or even orders from members of the clergy, as one can see, for example, in a pyxis in the British

[76] Beckwith 1963: 48, fig. 19. [77] Beckwith 1963: 54, figs. 103–5; Wessel 1964, fig. 88.

Figure 9.10 Ivory: medicine box with Isis or Tyche, Dumbarton Oaks.

Museum which shows the story of St Menas.[78] Even though they may not have been found in Alexandria, their thematic character is sufficient proof of their origin in that metropolis.

The situation is reversed when we consider the magnificent silver plate in the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, with a country scene in relief.[79] It comes

[78] Beckwith 1963: 49, figs. 35–6; von Bargen 1996: 200–1, no. 201.
[79] Weitzmann-Fiedler 1979: 251–2, no. 131.

from Thebes, but the purely Hellenistic style and the quality of the work make it likely to be an Alexandrian product. Unfortunately, products of luxury craftsmanship using materials of high value like gold and silver had little chance of survival; this lack of surviving examples of their products is the reason that the importance of Alexandrian workshops in this period is sometimes doubted.[80]

In the sixth century, Alexandria remained an artistic and intellectual capital. Book illustration, at the junction of these two domains, remained at a high level in the city that had once been the home of the great Library. One of the rare surviving witnesses to this art, although badly damaged, is the illuminations of the Cotton Genesis, which in the sixth century are still firmly in the Hellenistic tradition.[81] The illustrations of the Alexandrian World Chronicle, today in Moscow,[82] display a more linear and rigid style which leads one to date them to the seventh century.

In the early years of the seventh century, the life of the city was deeply shaken by the Sassanid Persian invasion of 619. The investigations of the Polish archaeological mission at Kom el-Dikka have shown just how badly the imperial baths there suffered from this episode.[83] The graffiti on the seats and bases of the domed meeting hall can be dated to the start of the seventh century.[84] Many of these concern the Green faction of the hippodrome.[85] They bear witness to the last period of use of the building before the Persian invasion, which must have caused (or at least coincided with) the collapse of the dome. The building was cleared but not repaired, in contrast to the neighbouring baths, the lecture rooms, and the quarter to the east of street R4, all of which continued in use.

There was only a brief interval between the devastating Sassanid invasion and the Arab conquest of 642.[86] There does not appear to have been any great damage to the city on the latter occasion, which was the subject of a negotiated surrender. The defence walls were in any case hardly imposing. It is difficult to distinguish them from later Arab fortifications, but in some places the Roman and even Ptolemaic walls can be seen under the Arab constructions.[87] It is true that the city was retaken by the Byzantines, but in 645 the Arab troops again took possession of the city, this time permanently.[88]

Although the capture of Alexandria was a fundamental dividing point in the political history of the city, it does not seem to have been so decisive for

[80] Baratte 1995: 78–81. [81] Kessler 1979: 457, no. 408; Weitzmann and Kessler 1986, especially 30–4.
[82] Hodjash 2002: 42, no. 10. [83] Kołątaj 1976: 217–29. [84] Borkowski 1981.
[85] Kiss 1999: 135–42. [86] Haas 1997: 337–51.
[87] Tkaczow 1993: *passim* (cf. index, p. 333, s.v. City walls and fortifications).
[88] Heinen 1991: 100.

its daily life. The city was not sacked, local administrations continued to function, and the patriarchs (both Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian) continued to direct the Christian community. The composition of the population certainly did not change at once and, just as we took the inscription of 'Pompey's Pillar' under the Tetrarchy as the beginning of late antique Alexandria, so we may symbolically consider the end of ancient Alexandria in the seventh century to be marked by two Arabic funerary inscriptions, carved at the beginning of the eighth century on the marble socles of the monumental meeting hall of Kom el-Dikka.[89]

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[89] Kubiak 1975: 134, pl. I.

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CHAPTER 10

The other cities in later Roman Egypt

Peter van Minnen

Most cities in Roman and late antique Egypt were the ancient capitals of the nomes into which Egypt had been divided since pharaonic times. Although some shifts occurred in the boundaries and even in the status of these nomes, most of them retained their ancient shape with a so-called metropolis at the centre. These forty-plus metropoleis were the backbone of the administration of Graeco-Roman Egypt through late antiquity.[1] Greeks and Romans added a few cities in the Greek style, but these were not the capitals of nomes but simply carved out of existing nomes. Since Diocletian, Egypt had been divided into provinces as well, each with a capital of its own. In Upper Egypt, the so-called Thebais, this was Antinoopolis, the Greek city founded by Hadrian; in the western Delta, Alexandria.

Cities in the Nile Valley, including Antinoopolis, are much better known than Alexandria and the cities in the Delta. There the state of preservation of ancient remains is not very good, and textual evidence in the form of papyri exists only for cities in the Nile Valley. One exceptional village in the Nile Valley, Aphrodite, has yielded a huge quantity of papyri from the sixth and the early eighth centuries. It was an exceptional village in that it was unusually large even for Egypt. It had been the metropolis of a nome earlier, but in the course of the Graeco-Roman period it had lost its status. In what follows I will occasionally refer to evidence from Aphrodite.[2] I will not discuss the much better preserved site of Abu Mina, which is located in the desert near Alexandria, because this is not an ordinary city but a religious tourist attraction. The focus will be on cities in the Nile Valley.

Although these cities have yielded large numbers of papyri from the later Roman period, there is no abundance of other archaeological data. One

[1] I include the fourth century in late antiquity. See Bagnall 2003.
[2] On Aphrodite, see now Zuckerman 2004. Similar towns between villages and cities are Cynopolis near Oxyrhynchos and Cusae near Hermopolis, which had been independent nome capitals in the pharaonic period. Some villages were promoted to metropoleis in late antiquity, such as the two Theodosiopoleis.

reason is that many sites were continuously occupied since later Roman times, which distinguishes Egypt from Syria and North Africa, where the Arab conquest led to the abandonment of sites. But the fact that many later Roman papyri were retrieved from Egyptian cities about a hundred years ago suggests that careful investigation of their archaeological remains would have allowed at least a glimpse of their layout, public buildings, and domestic architecture. Unfortunately, the papyri were retrieved while whole sites were carried off for fertilizer,[3] and archaeologists working in Egypt at the time were not interested in the later Roman period. They unceremoniously removed the later Roman evidence. Objects, including papyri, were detached from their immediate archaeological context. Even the broader context of the site as a whole was removed, so that we can no longer imagine how the textual evidence related to realities on the ground. In late antiquity the percentage of texts that deal with sales or leases of urban property is much larger than for the earlier period, and we would have liked to be able to compare the archaeological realities with these texts. The textual evidence has to some extent been digested by papyrologists and historians. A somewhat older study[4] covers the papyrological evidence from later Roman Oxyrhynchos but is written in Russian. Collective volumes using documentary and literary evidence for Koptos[5] and Panopolis[6] have appeared recently. The little archaeological evidence from later Roman sites has yet to be subjected to closer scrutiny. Some sites have been investigated with greater care in more recent years such as Hermopolis,[7] one of the bigger metropoleis, and Elephantine,[8] admittedly not much of a city but a potential model for what happened in smaller metropoleis. Even if the data are as yet not as abundant as we could wish, their earthiness adds an important dimension to what we know from the textual evidence.[9] When it comes, e.g., to domestic architecture, textual evidence complements archaeological

[3] This happened in the relatively short time frame between the widespread introduction of crops that needed fertilizer (e.g., cotton) and the widespread use of mineral and chemical fertilizers. Sites had been ransacked for fertilizer even in antiquity, but that was mainly for use in gardens, not on a large scale as in the later nineteenth century. By the time mineral and chemical fertilizers were widely used in Egypt very little remained of ancient sites. In the meantime archaeologists and papyrologists had salvaged some papyri.

[4] Fikhman 1976.

[5] *Autour de Coptos* (Paris 2000), an exhibition catalogue with a small but important section on the late period, including domestic architecture. There is also a volume of essays on Koptos with the same title published as Supplement 3 of *Topoi* (Lyon 2002).

[6] Egberts et al. 2002, where a larger part is devoted to the later period, including an essay on the city as metaphor in religious texts.

[7] Bailey 1991 and 1998.

[8] Arnold 2003. For the papyrological evidence for houses in neighbouring Syene, see Husson 1990.

[9] For a brief sketch of the physical remains of late antique cities in Egypt, see Grossmann 2003.

evidence. Together they allow us to get a sense of the texture of Egyptian metropoleis through time, but the archaeological evidence is so far minimal. I will leave a discussion of the political community behind the physical realities until the second part of my contribution.

The population in Egyptian cities grew in the early Roman period.[10] The Antonine plague put a dent in this,[11] and there is no sign of a successful recuperation in the century until the monetary collapse in 275. The monetary collapse itself had an even graver impact on Egypt with (a) rents for *basic* agriculture (i.e., growing cereals) dropping to their lowest level in Roman times and (b) prices for *basic* commodities (i.e., cereals) soaring to their highest level in Roman times. Rents took a long time to get back on their feet: sixth-century rents are 20–25 per cent higher than in the fourth century. Prices dropped more quickly thanks to (some would say: notwithstanding) the monetary policies of the emperors. At least the solidus provided the solid foundation for a sound monetary economy, and prices dropped already in the course of the fourth century, long before they stopped being expressed in the old denarii for accounting purposes. Production of basic commodities lagged behind prices and did not pick up until the late fifth–sixth century. The different development of production and prices at first benefited the cities: they profited more from the drop in prices than villages. Crafts, trade, and commerce picked up steam while agriculture was lagging behind, and the former were as important to the bulk of the population in cities as the latter was to the bulk of the population in villages.

One rather expects the urban population to have grown, but there is little evidence for the reoccupation of previously deserted areas within cities. In Apollonopolis a residential area was indeed reoccupied in the later Roman period after having remained unoccupied for centuries, but this is a special case. The original Jewish quarter was abandoned in the second century. The new occupants in the later sixth century were Christians. In the late fifth–sixth century, villages also picked up steam. Population size peaked in the sixth century before the ultimate decline, which came presumably as a

[10] For a fuller statement of what follows, see my contribution to J.-U. Krause and C. Witschel (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike – Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Stuttgart 2006). I do not accept Witschel 2004, who downplays the importance of changes in the epigraphic habit in the cities of the Roman world (admittedly not very important in Egypt but only in Egypt) and especially the effect of the inflation after 275 (more than 'turbulence'). This all but destroyed the way the cities financed themselves and reshaped the way most urban dwellers lived. The classical city survived even in Egypt, at least as an ideology (visible in the use of lofty titles for cities), and if we follow Liebeschuetz 2001 in regarding the later sixth–seventh century as the actual time of 'death' of the classical city, it is perhaps no exaggeration to call the period from 275 until *c.* 370 its first 'heart attack'.

[11] On the size of the dent in the Arsinoite nome, see van Minnen 2001.

consequence of the bubonic plague, at any rate before the invasions by the Persians and Arabs in the seventh century. The sixth-century peak was by no means as high as that in the first two centuries of Roman rule and was also more precarious.

Given the fact that most cities in the Nile Valley were nome capitals going back to pharaonic times, we cannot expect them to have become Graeco-Roman cities right away. The temple of the main god took up a huge part of the centre of any metropolis, and existing architecture was replaced or complemented only gradually by buildings in the Graeco-Roman style. The metropoleis did not have a civic status of their own in the Hellenistic period, and only here and there were Greek communities able to add buildings of their own. The Romans gave the metropoleis a civic status by putting the wealthier part of the Greek population in charge in the course of the first century[12] and thus enabled them to initiate a more thoroughgoing transformation of 'their' metropoleis. The fact that the metropoleis did not have a council until Septimius Severus is irrelevant. They had magistrates, in part developed from Hellenistic gymnasium officials, in part created by the Romans, and these would have been recruited from the wealthier members of the Greek community in any case. These magistrates were supervised by the *stratêgos* of the nome, an administrative official representing the central government and brought in from outside. In the third century the councils enlisted more Greeks, but the Antonine plague had apparently eaten away at the financial resources of the cities, and only repairs were contemplated. The political crises of the mid-third century led to riots in some cities and destroyed some of the buildings in the centre of Hermopolis. Repairs were still undertaken, but the money had to be scraped together.[13]

In the second century the centres of the bigger metropoleis[14] underwent significant changes almost overnight – a physical revolution.[15] Colonnaded streets with shops arose, as did various buildings in the Graeco-Roman style with either a secular or a religious use. Gymnasia, markets, and nymphaea (public fountains) were built side by side with *kômastêria* (a kind of festival hall) and temples, especially of the imperial cult. The colonnaded streets added straight lines to the existing 'plan' of the metropoleis. Given their antiquity, one expects these cities to have been somewhat of a jumble except

[12] See my remarks in van Minnen 2002c.

[13] For the notorious case of Hermopolis under Gallienus, often interpreted as a sign of prosperity, see now van Minnen 2002b.

[14] The smaller metropoleis in the south of Egypt, where there was less room for expansion, remained relatively small in the Graeco-Roman period and have yielded virtually no archaeological or papyrological evidence for buildings in the Graeco-Roman style.

[15] For some data, see Bowman 1992.

for the temple of the main god. This had a straight *dromos*, a paved street to approach the temple during processions. The cities added in Graeco-Roman times, Alexandria and Antinoopolis[16], had a regular plan from the start, and we may assume this for Ptolemais as well. These Greek cities may have acted as challenges to the metropoleis, whose elite would have been interested in making 'their' metropoleis look like the Greek cities they were most familiar with. In late antiquity the formal distinction between these Greek cities and the Egyptian metropoleis was abolished. The latter finally received the same status as other cities in the empire, a status the Greek cities already enjoyed.

In the fourth century the way the cities were governed and financed changed. Supervision was now exercised by administrative officials from the urban community itself. More importantly, the inflation after 275 destroyed much of the financial basis of urban life. Funds melted away in the decades after 275, and soon enough the central government started to eat away at the remaining sources of income. When the cities lost a good part of their income from land, and the wealthiest inhabitants started to move away to more important cities (provincial capitals or Constantinople), the cities had to cut down on essential functions. Luckily, at the end of the fourth century Christianity made some of the things previously essential to urban life superfluous.

The urban water towers (*castella*) such as that in Hermopolis have yet to be investigated. These distribution centres of water for public fountains, baths, and the houses of the elite may still have functioned in late antiquity. We know that in the earlier Roman period the upkeep and exploitation of these water towers was financed more by contributions from urban magistrates than by the income from private users, including beer-brewers and the Jewish community.[17] The urban elite required lots of water in late antiquity too, especially if they also operated private baths for public use (for a fee). But the details are not yet clear.

Repairs of existing buildings in Egyptian cities continued in the fourth and fifth centuries. It comes as no surprise that public baths needed repair, because they are notoriously prone to rapid decay. But there are a few other instances of repair of public buildings. In *CPR* XXIII 32 of 450, e.g., a *politeuomenos*, a *patêr poleôs*, and another urban official commissioned by the *praeses Arcadiae* report on the repair in Herakleopolis of the theatre and *bêma* (where the visiting governor would sit in judgment). The three

[16] See, e.g., Pensabene 1993: 274. Note that the 'palaestra' there is in fact the ruin of an early nineteenth-century factory. See Bailey 1999.

[17] See the re-edition of an important document from second-century Arsinoe in Habermann 2000.

men were assisted by an architect, who produced a cost estimate. The *bêma* suggests that the buildings were used by the central government, indeed the *praeses* himself. The theatre could be a meeting hall of some sort rather than a theatre in the classical sense. The central government was now decentralized and thus could no longer limit its expenditure to Alexandria.

Cities could still squeeze something out of existing public buildings. They could let the space and sell the buildings that had lost their function. Once the Egyptian cult had become irrelevant, the temples could be sold for redevelopment or let to whoever had any use for them. In the later Roman period or just after antiquity some temples were indeed emptied out and reused as houses or workshops. The generous dimensions allowed multiple units to be erected against the walls. A parallel phenomenon was the division of larger houses into smaller units. The fact that such houses were divided up is not a sign of overpopulation but rather of a poorer population.[18] The inequality among urban dwellers increased in late antiquity, and a larger percentage of inhabitants had to rent living and working quarters.

The cities had to wait until Theodosius II officially permitted them to dispose of Egyptian temples. Often these temples were simply left alone. They had a peculiar architecture that made them hardly suitable for anything but the old cult. Once the cities were permitted to dispose of the temples, they could also be used as quarries for new buildings. These would often be churches, and these became architecturally more substantial in the same period. But churches would benefit more from temples and other public buildings in the Graeco-Roman style. Traditional Egyptian temples then were not even very useful as quarries. In Upper Egypt many Egyptian temples remain standing to this day, but in Middle Egypt and a fortiori in the Delta these temples have all but disappeared.

In pharaonic times in each metropolis a generous area around the temple of the main god had been marked off from the rest of the city with the help of walls. In Hermopolis these walls were taken down from the late period onwards wherever changes in the build-up of the city centre required it. A metropolis was also marked off with the help of walls from the surrounding countryside or at least from the *proastion*, the suburbs or rather the city outside the gates.[19] Many elite families had a residence there, an administrative centre and farm in one, a kind of hacienda. Elsewhere in the later Roman world walls were built around cities or their defensible parts because of the threat of raids from outside. In Egypt insecurity was

[18] Saradi 1998. [19] See Husson 1967.

also on the rise in late antiquity,[20] but this does not seem to have led to the same phenomenon as elsewhere. There is some evidence from Philae (admittedly not a city) that shows that walls were repaired, probably with a view to threats from the south (Nubians) or the desert (Blemmyes). It is perhaps reasonable to assume that greater archaeological attention to the outskirts of urban sites (rather than to the centre with the Egyptian temples) would yield some evidence for later Roman walls around Egyptian cities. But foreign invaders were never really a problem in Egypt – when they came they were immediately successful. First the Persians and then the Arabs did not leave much time for building walls. The textual evidence from Philae is linked to the special circumstances of the first cataract, where perhaps less formidable but still annoying raiders were a more serious threat than elsewhere. In late antiquity we hear of new army units stationed in or in the vicinity of cities, but we do not know where to locate them in the cities.

I will conclude this section with a few remarks on ecclesiastical architecture in Egyptian cities.[21] Churches had been present there in some form from fairly early on, but we do not know what they looked like. The textual evidence does not tell us, and we have not yet been able to identify the remains of a church in Egypt before the fourth century. From the fourth century date the first churches on the outskirts of towns, often in residential areas. The type is invariably the reformed basilica typical in Egypt. Only in cities on the Mediterranean coast do we find basilicas of a type found elsewhere in the Roman world. Most of Egypt adopted the distinctive Egyptian-style basilica fairly early. The churches could not immediately be built in the city centres because the space was used for other buildings. But after Theodosius II gave the cities a free hand to dispose of the public buildings they no longer needed, new churches could be built in their stead in the centre of town. This happened almost instantly, but not everywhere. In Hermopolis the first attested church was built in the south-western part of town, but when this turned out to be unsatisfactory because of a faulty design, a completely new basilica was built on the colonnaded east–west street immediately south of the main temple area. There the numerous Greek settlers had built an additional temple area in the Greek style in the Hellenistic period. Its temples were taken down, and architectural elements were reused for the basilica in the middle of the fifth century. The Egyptian temple to the north was less suitable for this and was only taken down

[20] Most of the admittedly incomplete evidence in van Minnen 2000b is from the later Roman period.
[21] See now Grossmann 2002 and his contribution to this volume, chapter 6 above.

in part when houses were built in it. As a rule Egyptian temples were not reused for churches in the cities. Churches were not paid for out of state funds, which had previously paid for the upkeep of Egyptian temples. Nor were churches paid for out of municipal funds. Private monies paid for them.

Over time each city acquired a large number of churches. The famous description of Oxyrhynchos in the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 5 mentions twelve churches already at the end of the fourth century, not counting the churches associated with monasteries. Oxyrhynchos had a homogeneous population, allowing the bishop to address people on a square as effectively as in a church. In later centuries the number of churches attested for cities such as Oxyrhynchos goes well beyond the dozen mentioned in the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, and even for a much smaller town such as Aphrodite the number of attested churches is a couple of dozen. The 'Catholic' church was the episcopal church. Other churches could be used for occasional services according to schedule.[22]

Later Roman Egypt was a world of cities. Now that I have briefly sketched how these cities looked and changed physically, I will use the textual evidence to sketch the way they were governed and financed in late antiquity.[23] To provide non-specialists with a sense of the evidence and how it changes over time, I will first give an overview of the kinds of textual data we have. They are almost all papyrus documents and were generated by three types of institutions, the central government, the municipal government, and private 'institutions' (including families and individuals). These three types kept state, civic, and private archives respectively. Most papyri were originally part of archives, larger bodies of texts kept for some purpose or other, but many papyri have become detached from the rest by the way they were retrieved and dispersed. I will here concentrate on the archives we can still recognize today. Some institutions that used to generate a lot of paperwork went out of business in the course of Roman imperial history, while others were only introduced in late antiquity. There are perplexing differences in what we have from various cities. Some cities yield far more official papers, others abound in family archives. Most papyri were found about a century ago, and almost all publications of late antique papyri draw on the same finds, so that we are still ill-informed about the fifth century.

[22] See Papaconstantinou 1996.

[23] The textual evidence for 'the long fourth century' has been explored in Bagnall 1993: 45–109, which covers the period from Diocletian to Theodosius II, and for 'the age of Justinian' we have Alston 2002: 292–319 and Liebeschuetz 2001: 169–202, where additional references may be found.

The most relevant fact non-specialists need to know is that most papyri from later Roman Egypt derive from cities and almost nothing from villages.[24] In the earlier Graeco-Roman period, there is a preponderance of material from villages on the outskirts of the Arsinoite nome. These villages hold on to their ground (also literally) until about the fourth century, when papyri from them peter out.[25] The later Roman period gives the illusion that inhabitants of the cities, especially the elite, owned all the land and that all villagers depended on them for land or even credit. But some villagers must have continued to lease land and borrow money also locally from wealthier villagers, even if we cannot document this.[26] The land leases of the later period tend to be for land closer to the cities. With few exceptions, urban landowners did not own land at a great distance from their cities anymore. This tended to push the rent up, because the urban market for agricultural produce was so much closer. Rent in kind could be hand-delivered in the city itself rather than deposited in a warehouse in a village.

The more substantial private, civic, and state archives from later Roman Egypt are as follows.[27] Private archives are by far the most numerous. They can cover anything from private correspondence to ownership documents for the family property. Civic archives are those kept by the cities themselves. They deal with the administrative affairs of the city, its income and expenditure. State archives are mostly concerned with taxation and include comprehensive documents for landownership.

Private: *Heroninos* from Theadelphia in the Arsinoite nome, administrator of estates (third century); *Apollonios paralêmptês* (receiver) from Pesla in the Hermopolite nome, administrator of an estate; *Theophanes* from Hermopolis; *Aurelia Charite and her son Asklepiades* from Hermopolis; *Ammon Scholasticus* from Panopolis;[28] *Leonides* from Oxyrhynchos; *Papnoutis and Dorotheos* from Oxyrhynchos (all fourth century); *Taurinos (and Sarapodoros)* from Hermopolis; *Church of Anastasia* in Hermopolis; *Catholic church* of Oxyrhynchos (all three fifth century); *Dioskoros* from Aphrodite, notary public;[29] *Phoibammon son of Triadelphos* from Aphrodite, his cousin's husband; *Apions* from Oxyrhynchos, owners of estates in the Oxyrhynchite nome (all three sixth century).

[24] Compare Gagos and van Minnen 1992.

[25] I stick to my own conclusions in van Minnen 1995a, *pace* Keenan 2003.

[26] As far as credit is concerned, the earlier fourth century is a dark age because of the inflation of 275 until *c.* 370. The inflation made people more aware of money and may have actually given a boost to credit operations in money. See Carrié 2003.

[27] Details can be found with the help of http://lhpc.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/.

[28] Discussed in van Minnen 2002a.

[29] On Dioskoros, see van Minnen 2003.

Are the church archives private or civic? Many scholars think the church hierarchy replaced traditional municipal government, but churches remained private institutions throughout late antiquity, and therefore texts documenting the way they were administered are counted as private. Leonides and Papnoutis and Dorotheos are small entrepreneurs, probably more representative of the urban population as a whole than the landowners of the other private archives. Notarial documents (contracts between individuals) involving craftsmen constitute a sizeable part of the evidence, far more so than in the earlier Roman period. Leases of various kinds of urban property, labour contracts, sales, and loans proliferate. Letters and receipts are the most frequent types of texts, but notarial documents are often more telling, as they tend to be less arcane than letters or less abrupt than receipts.

Civic: *Boulê* (council) *of Hermopolis*; *Boulê of Oxyrhynchos*; *Grain Dole of Oxyrhynchos* (all three third century); *Logistai* (*curatores*) *of Oxyrhynchos* (fourth century).

We do not have anything like the council (and grain dole) archives from elsewhere in the Roman world. Councils were introduced in Egyptian metropoleis under Septimius Severus. The Roman government promoted the development of Egyptian cities on the imperial model long before that, and the introduction of councils was just a step in a longer process. Until the bottom fell out of the municipal finances because of inflation after 275, the Greeks in Oxyrhynchos benefited from a grain dole. This was a short-lived social support system, and it is attested only for a couple of years.[30]

State: the *Landlisten*, registers of land owned by urban residents from Hermopolis and Antinoopolis in the Hermopolite nome (fourth century); the *Codex fiscal*, a list of tax payments made for land in the Hermopolite nome (seventh century).

Individual receipts for state taxes are also important. Oddly enough, Hermopolis has produced hardly any such receipts from the earlier Roman period. Poll tax and receipts for paying it disappear everywhere until the Arab period. Papers documenting the civic status of free persons also disappear once the poll tax, which some urban residents paid at a lower rate, was discontinued after 275. The disappearance of the poll tax and of the privileged status of some urban residents is an important social change in Egyptian cities.

The question of whether differences in documentation also reflect real differences in the way the various cities operated is difficult to answer. The

[30] Apart from the edition, *P.Oxy.* XL, see especially Carrié 1975. Much has been written on it since.

fact that cities everywhere started to look increasingly like one another in late antiquity suggests that differences in documentation reflect real differences between cities. If we take a closer look at the various cities, striking differences and similarities, also compared with the earlier period, emerge. I will limit myself here to the best-known cities.

Arsinoe is known for the earlier period mainly through archives found in villages on the fringe of the Arsinoite nome – villages that died out in about the fourth century, which helped some papyri survive. In late antiquity Arsinoe is known mainly through papyri from the city itself. Private archives have produced numerous leases of land and other property as well as other types of contracts. The situation is much the same in *Hermopolis* except that there are virtually no archives from villages in the Hermopolite nome and receipts for state taxes are virtually non-existent in the earlier period. Private archives from late antiquity contain massive numbers of leases of land and other property as well as other types of contracts. State papers include consolidated lists such as the *Landlisten* and the *Codex fiscal*, which we do not have for Arsinoe. Earlier, Hermopolis also yielded a significant number of archives, both private and civic. There is a great continuity in the documentation for the exploitation of land by urban landowners. This latter aspect is the sore point in the documentation for *Oxyrhynchos*. For the earlier Roman period it consists of numerous leases of land and other property as well as other types of contracts. For late antiquity it amounts to just nineteen leases of land, only four in the Apions archive. This is a complete break with the earlier period. It seems on balance more likely that areas where the documentation remains roughly the same experienced fewer changes than areas where the documentation is marked by significant changes. There is also a virtual break in the documentation from Oxyrhynchos between *c.* 370 and the later fifth to early seventh century when the Apions dominate the documentation.

If one looks at the Greek literary papyri from later Roman Egypt,[31] the impression gained from the documents is confirmed in part. Whenever we know the provenance of literary papyri from the fifth century onwards, it tends to be one of the cities also known for its documents, such as Oxyrhynchos, Hermopolis, and Antinoopolis. Arsinoe scores very badly here, but this may be due to sloppy recording of provenance, because we do not expect many of the *c.* 200 literary papyri from the Arsinoite nome to derive from villages. Oxyrhynchos yields first place to Hermopolis as a provenance of literary papyri after 400, a sharp contrast with the situation in

[31] With the help of http://ldab.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/.

the earlier period. Antinoopolis also scores very high, and the greatest variety of literature seems to come from this city rather than from Oxyrhynchos, again in contrast to what we find in the earlier period. In general, literature tends to be of two kinds: manuscripts of standard authors that were read in school, including texts from the Old and New Testaments, and manuscripts for use in a church context, including many single leaves with liturgical texts. The latter would become even more important if we added Coptic literary papyri, but these have not yet been inventoried properly. Notwithstanding the narrow focus of most of the texts, higher education was not absent from the cities. In late antiquity the famous poets from Upper Egypt must have been educated in their home towns before moving on to greater glory elsewhere.

We are ill-informed about the way cities in later Roman Egypt financed essential civic functions.[32] Although the legal codes assume that cities were still responsible for paying their own bills, the documentary evidence allows only rare glimpses of this. The traditional structures of municipal government were partially intact, and the offices added in the later Roman period are even better known, but they almost always appear in a context that stresses their responsibility to the central government rather than to their own city. What does appear is that some civic functions were financed by specifically earmarked sources of income. Cities financed public physicians, the so-called *archiatroi*, prisons, and police officers in this way, to mention only a few recurrent expenses. Urban sports and entertainment were paid for by a quota system. *P.Lond.* III 1028 of the seventh century is a list of contributions by various craft and trade guilds for the upkeep of the circus personnel.

This kind of targeted financing is more 'institutionalized' than the earlier system, which had left much to the discretion of the council or earlier of the magistrates, although a quota system for their contributions, e.g., for the upkeep of the urban water supply, was in place in Egypt long before it was introduced elsewhere in the Roman world. By linking civic offices directly with certain types of expenditure the later Roman system everywhere left little room for adaptation or change. The system was clearly less flexible and less negotiable, in other words less political and less competitive. Earlier Roman Egypt had been a little like this, but this trend now became pervasive in Egypt and elsewhere.

How the accounts were squared we do not really know. In state papers the fiscal responsibilities to the central government loom large, not civic income

[32] See on this especially Liebeschuetz 1996.

and expenditure for building activities, or the upkeep and exploitation of the water supply and food supplements for the population at large, the kinds of thing we hear about in papyri from earlier Roman Egypt. A complication arises with the documentation for the so-called *oikoi*, administrative units centred on churches and other religious institutions, wealthy landowners, and imperial estates. All three were kept separate from ordinary taxpayers in the state accounts because they contributed some additional taxes. In the private accounts of these three kinds of big landowners we find a bewildering mixture of private and public expenditure including the payment of taxes. Here too the topic of civic finances which interests us so much was not a primary concern, but we do hear that some responsibilities were undertaken by certain *oikoi* on a long-term cycle (attested up to sixty-five years). That landowners above a certain threshold were responsible for certain civic expenditures appears from *P.Oxy.* XVI 2040, which is concerned with the repair of a bath in Oxyrhynchos. The text assumes a quota system but does not prove that the Apions regularly paid 25 per cent of *all* municipal expenditure. The account includes only the bigger landowners. That we have not yet found extensive documentation for civic expenditure is perhaps no more than a quirk. For earlier Roman Egypt we happen to be extremely lucky with the council archives of the third century.

The fourth-century reforms in local government ultimately failed.[33] Because of the overriding fiscal interest of the central government, cities and their leadership were doing heavy duty for the tax collection in their nomes. The conflicting interests of the cities and the state could not be solved by the new offices, which were supposedly responsible to the state but recruited from among the local elite. The introduction of the pagarch in the late fifth century as the one office with overall responsibility for the collection of taxes in the nome (a parallel to the *vindex* of Alexandria) allowed a firmer control in the local sphere but had the same problem of putting in charge a person with mixed loyalty to the state and to his city (or to himself). The pagarch survived into Arab times. The multiple offices of the fourth century and generally the increasing informal power structures in late antique cities allowed the central government to ignore the cities per se altogether. But there must have been a 'political' community behind the physical realities in the cities. The councils survived but they too are mostly attested in contexts where their role vis-à-vis the government is at stake.[34] In *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67004[35] councillors from Ombos are in Antinoopolis, the

[33] There is a brief discussion in Rouillard 1928: 62–7.
[34] Geremek 1990.
[35] Republished by Dijkstra 2004.

provincial capital, for official purposes. We see other members of the urban elite travel to Antioch or Constantinople, mostly on state business.

The traditional magistracies peter out in the early to mid-fourth century documentation. One or two are attested somewhat later, such as the gymnasiarch. The new offices include the *logistês* (curator), the central figure to whom other urban officials administering the countryside, such as the *praepositi pagi*, reported. The *logistês* was assisted by an exactor, the reformed *stratêgos* who was now recruited locally, and the defensor or *syn-* or *ekdikos*. The *riparios* was in charge of the police. The central government now tried to use the whole of the civic administrative apparatus for its own purposes rather than just one appointed official (the *stratêgos*). Cities became less independent because they were more occupied with state business. The state bureaucracy more effectively impinged on what the local governments could do. In the fourth century the *proedros* or *prytanis* was a key figure for the municipal administration, but we do not know much about him except that he was not appointed by the council. The *patêr poleôs* is an even more shadowy figure. Women could also take on this job, something that had not happened with municipal offices in earlier Roman Egypt, when there had always been enough male candidates from a broader elite. The occurrence of abstract titles such as *logisteia*, *pateria*, and *proedria* reveal that the (implied financial) responsibility had become more important in late antiquity than the actual person manning the job. Such titles are often found in combination, which shows that a smaller number of individuals or families now dominated the scene. Coptic sources refer to those who held formal and informal power invariably as *archontes*, implying a situation akin to what we find in the second century with its magistrates but no council.

Religion added important dimensions to municipal life in late antiquity. Through the sermon the bishop could call on almost the entire population to do something for the common good.[36] Earlier the council and yet earlier the magistrates among themselves would have been the exclusive venue for this. One might say that over time an ever increasing number of urban dwellers was involved in the running of Egyptian cities, even if the participation was also increasingly passive. Only after the Arab conquest does the local bishop become the representative of choice for the (Christian) community. Bishops are urban figures, but in the less urbanized world of Upper Egypt they often appear to have lived outside their city. Religious

[36] I have commented on an interesting case where the population provides the physical labour for the repair of a public building rather than cash contributions in van Minnen 2000a: 467–8.

foundations run by the bishop include hospitals.[37] These were not financed by the civic community.

In late antiquity the numbers of the landowning urban elite declined because land was less productive and taxed more heavily than before. The cities too lost a good part of their income, because the state arrogated some of it and because they depended on the contribution of the now less numerous members of the urban elite. Beyond the elite we may estimate on the basis of the *Landlisten* that over 90 per cent of urban dwellers, in Antinoopolis as well as in Hermopolis, owned no land at all, requiring them to work for a living. Some of them may have been employed in agriculture, as gardens and vineyards were located within easy reach of the cities, but most will have been employed in crafts, trades, or services. According to the same *Landlisten*, the wealthiest people actually lived in Hermopolis rather than Antinoopolis. This suggests that that state service such as in the provincial capital Antinoopolis did not generate enough wealth to give rise to a new elite in the fourth century.[38] For the bulk of the population of the cities the abolition of craftsmen's taxes at the end of the fifth century would have been a boost, which might explain why they were required to contribute to some civic functions such as the circus, but the abolition itself has been questioned recently.[39] Crafts and trades, services and especially the food supply are much in evidence in Egyptian cities in late antiquity. Cities would have had a critical mass of producers in some lines of business, allowing the production of a surplus for export, primarily in textiles. All Egyptian cities produced some special textiles, which people elsewhere, again mainly in cities where there was a critical mass of buyers, thought they needed.

I will give some statistics (collected several years ago, but texts published since cannot have altered the basic picture). I collected all instances of individual craftsmen mentioned in papyri from Aphrodite (a smaller town), Arsinoe, and Hermopolis. For all three, the evidence for craftsmen is very similar: the same kinds of documents are at stake, which makes it less likely that the data are skewed simply because we are looking at different sources of information (e.g., notarial documents vs tax lists). I excluded urban farmers, scribes (who are bound to be overrepresented in any case), officials, clerics, and even landowners (who are identified as such for the first time in late

[37] Van Minnen 1995b.

[38] Banaji 2001: 116–17. He believes that such state service did somehow generate enough wealth to give rise to a new elite from the middle of the fifth century onwards.

[39] Carrié 2002: 317. There is evidence for payment of craftsmen's taxes after they were supposedly abolished in the late fifth century, at first through the guilds, then individually again.

antiquity, turning landowning into a 'profession'). These exclusions make the result perhaps less representative of the urban community as a whole, but they also make the three towns more broadly comparable. Here are the percentages of the four most frequently attested 'sectors'.

	Arsinoe[40]	Hermopolis[41]	Aphrodite[42]
Centuries covered	VI–VIII	V–VIII	VI and VIII
food	36.1%	35.6%	16.5%
textile	18.8%	17.85%	8.35%
construction	17%	17.85%	7.85%
river trades	5.85%	5.9%	19.0%

The two metropoleis score surprisingly similarly,[43] and the smaller town behaves somewhat differently in areas where one would expect it. In the bigger cities the food supply was a much more complicated affair than in a smaller town with closer ties to the countryside. Textiles were produced at least in part for export, and this makes less sense in a smaller town. In cities, people more often did not live in a house they built or even owned themselves. Still, the relative importance of the various trades in the two metropoleis as compared to the smaller town is even more strikingly similar (if we except the river trades). In all three towns food is twice as important as textile and construction, which are about equal between themselves. I think we can put this down as an important result and more confidently extrapolate from a handful of cities and towns and even villages to 'Egypt as a whole'.

The decline of the urban elite in terms of their income and numbers and the impoverishment of the cities per se led to a different kind of city in Egypt in late antiquity. Although the 'classical' Graeco-Roman city was late in coming, since the second century, when expenditure on Egyptian cities peaked, they were starting to look like cities elsewhere in the Roman world. In the third century, expenditure was already much reduced,

[40] The figures for sixth- to eighth-century Arsinoe are based on the prosopography of Diethart 1980. Persons explicitly originating in villages have been excluded. In all, some 1,000 persons with occupation are known for late antique Arsinoe, about as many as for sixth-century Aphrodite alone.

[41] Based on a count made several years ago. Some 1,000 persons with relevant occupation are known from Greek and Coptic sources for fifth- to eighth-century Hermopolis, a lot more than for the earlier period.

[42] See MacCoull 1984: 69, for the data. The classification used by MacCoull includes farmers, big landowners, officials, and ecclesiastics, but I have removed them.

[43] In recent years we have been told to assume that everything was different from place to place, but maybe that is not actually helpful in understanding the economy of a Roman province.

notwithstanding the larger number of individuals participating in the running of the cities, and by the fourth century it had become impossible to do much of anything without going to great length. Cities had been required since the second century to seek the permission of the Roman government for civic expenditures. This did not change in late antiquity except that this now became common elsewhere in the empire as well.

When we finally consider the place of Egyptian cities in the wider world of late antiquity, the (now smaller) province, the whole of Egypt, the empire, and even the world outside, we notice that mobility was up and became almost routine. In late antiquity there was a greater degree of integration in the Roman world and even beyond the borders, in part thanks to Christianity. Some urban dwellers from Egypt 'made it' in the higher circles of government and culture. The Apions of Oxyrhynchos made it to the consulate in Constantinople, and poets from Panopolis and other cities in Upper Egypt set the tone in literature elsewhere. In earlier Roman times an athlete from Hermopolis, M. Aurelius Asklepiades, had 'made it' in Rome. In the later Roman period the new Egyptian 'athletes' (of God) rarely lived in the cities anymore.

In Sahidic Coptic there was no Egyptian word for 'city'. Instead the Greek 'polis' was used.[44] Maybe this sums it all up: in late antiquity the Egyptian city finally became a Greek city.

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CHAPTER II

Byzantine Egyptian villages[1]

James G. Keenan

The year is AD 543. On the first of the month of Tybi (28 December), an assistant defensor of Antaiopolis named Kollouthos had arrived at the village of Aphrodite in Middle Egypt on public business. While he was there, a local landowner, the now famous Flavius Dioskoros, asked him to inspect damage to a field in the village's northern plain. Kollouthos' autopsy revealed that the field had indeed been damaged. Some of the standing crops had been trampled in the mud, others thrust aside and uprooted: they had been rendered useless for harvest. The damage had allegedly been inflicted by a shepherd who 'in [reportedly] tyrannical fashion' had driven his flock through the field, claiming in his own defence a traditional right of way. All this, and more, is recorded in an affidavit made out by assistant defensor Kollouthos. He seems to have had a very busy day.[2]

The year is AD 497, the date Phaophi 4 (1 October). The axle of a water-wheel has worn out or broken. Aurelius Joseph son of Abraham, a 'registered farmer'[3] from the hamlet (*epoikion*) of Papsaou in the Oxyrhynchite nome has 'gone up' to the city to secure a new one. He acknowledges receipt of the new part in a document of common type addressed to his landlord, Flavius Strategius, Count of the Devoted Domestics, son of Apion, a distinguished Egyptian of consular rank.[4] There is, of course, little chance that Joseph saw the great man face to face. Presumably, as evidenced on other occasions,[5] securing the new axle required surrender of the old one.

The year is AD 439, the date Pachon 20 (15 May). There has been a disagreement about water rights at a place called Thanesamen in the Arsinoite

[1] Substantially written under a Loyola University Chicago Summer (2003) Faculty Fellowship.

[2] See Keenan 1985, re-edition with commentary on *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67087.

[3] *Enapographos georgos/colonus adscripticius.* The social and legal status of these 'tied tenants' is a significant problem. The papyrus evidence is almost exclusively Oxyrhynchite. The range is largely confined to the type of document illustrated here (see next note) and to guarantees for their remaining in place and performing their work, for which see Fikhman 1981.

[4] *P.Oxy.* XVI 1982, cf. XIX 2244 ('Supply of Axles for Water-Wheels') and Tacoma 1998.

[5] E.g., *P.Oxy.* XXXVI 2779 (530).

nome. In a document addressed to the villagers of Karanis, the villagers are warned: they have no right to the water of Thanesamen, or to nearby fields. If anyone from Karanis tries to draw water at Thanesamen and gets beaten up, or, as the document puts it, 'crushed', in the attempt, it shall be with impunity. Shepherds who have been grazing their flocks nearby are to be unmolested.[6]

I start with these three richly anecdotal documents, in reverse chronological order and from three different venues, because they give a good sense of the kinds of animated moments the papyri offer to students of rural Egypt, Egypt of the villages, in the Byzantine period. Both individually and collectively they provide archetypal vignettes. All three, as so often in the documentary papyri, are concerned with life's disruptions: fields get damaged, machinery breaks or wears out, villagers argue over water to the point of 'getting physical'. Taken together, they suggest both the characteristically Egyptian symbiosis of agriculture and pastoralism and the integration of village and city life, often – though not necessarily in these examples – to the village's disadvantage.[7]

Considerations like these seem partly to lie behind Roger Bagnall's caution to readers of his book *Egypt in Late Antiquity*. He there remarks early on about what he calls an 'insidious character of the evidence'. Most of the surviving papyrological evidence, it is held, was generated by 'the propertied classes of the cities of Egypt' – Oxyrhynchos and Hermopolis (to a great degree), Antinoopolis, Panopolis, Arsinoe, and a few other cities (to a far lesser degree) – in other words, the cities which Peter van Minnen discusses in this volume (chapter 10 above). Even rich village archives like those of fourth-century Karanis and Theadelphia, in Bagnall's formulation, 'are largely the result of demands and relationships originating from the cities'.[8]

If this is true of Bagnall's late antiquity, running from Diocletian to the mid-fifth century, how much more so for the centuries that follow? This is because the villages of the Arsinoite nome, or Fayyum, that produced so much documentation for the Ptolemaic and Roman periods fall silent in the third and fourth centuries. Those in the far north-east and north-west lay at the end of the irrigation system and when that fell into disrepair they were either abandoned or greatly diminished. The document from the north-eastern village of Karanis cited above, the one about disputed water rights dating to 439, is a peculiar outlier, more than fifty years later than the next latest securely dated papyrus from the once great village. But this does not mean that Karanis was abandoned in the fifth century – at

[6] *P.Haun.* III 58, with Rea 1993. [7] Cf. Keenan 1989 and 1981. [8] Bagnall 1993: 5.

least not immediately or entirely. The Karanis papyrus and a Columbia papyrus assigned to the fifth century, describing violent resistance to tax collection,[9] may suggest a village that had fallen on hard times; but archaeological remains in the form of pottery and terracottas and a couple of stray coins suggest the village continued in some form into the sixth or seventh century.[10] There is, besides, the chance of two late references to Karanis in the documentary papyri, one in a three-line fragment in Vienna, another in a substantial list of Fayyum villages in Berlin, both of which beg fresh inspection.[11]

In neither instance, however, does the village name survive in full, and even if these prove to be legitimate late references to Karanis, they appear on papyri that do not, as far as we know, emanate from Karanis itself. Instead, they are found on papyri that seemingly derive from the renowned first 'Fayyum find' of 1877–8 in the mounds of Kiman Faris near the Fayyum's modern capital, Madinat al-Fayyum; they were originally written in Arsinoe, the Fayyum's ancient capital. Tens of thousands of these papyri were uncovered and dispersed through the antiquities market, to Paris, Berlin, and, especially, Vienna, in the 1880s. Most actively involved in their publication, early on, was Carl Wessely, famous as one of papyrology's pioneers.[12] By dint of practice, to quote the late Sir Eric Turner,[13] 'Wessely had taught himself to read the most difficult handwritings, and began a chalcenteric output of publication'. This chalcenterism notwithstanding, as Roger Bagnall described the situation in August 2001,[14] what is now available for study of the Byzantine Fayyum is negligible when set against what is available for the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Nearly all of the papyrus documentation is from the Kiman Faris mounds; much of it is scrappy; most of it still appears in Wessely's antiquated editions; little of it is absolutely datable; most of it has been ignored, or lightly regarded and unassimilated – except that several minor archives within and across collections have recently been identified and their documents published or republished as such.[15]

[9] Rea 1994. See also van Minnen 1995: 53–4.

[10] Evidence summarized in Keenan 2003.

[11] *SPP* X 67.2, *SB* I 5339.25. *BGU* II 608, in which Karanis prominently figures, once thought to be 'aus arabischer Zeit', certainly belongs to the fourth century (*BL* 8.30). But see *P.Fay.* 145, assigned to the sixth century, but published in description only and without indication of how the village name appears in the Greek (reference owed to Gregg Schwendner). [P.Fay. 145 is now republished as SPP III (second edition) 556 ('early fifth century').]

[12] For obituaries of Carl Wessely (1860–1931), see *Aegyptus* 12 (1932): 250–5 (Hans Gerstinger) and *Jahresbericht über die Fortschritte der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* 241B (1933): 1–24, with bibliography (Theodor Hopfner). See, in brief, W. R. Dawson and E. P. Uphill, *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, 3rd edn. by M. L. Bierbrier (London 1995): 437–8.

[13] Turner 1968: 22–3.

[14] Bagnall 2001: 29. My present chapter is deeply indebted to that paper (now Bagnall 2005).

[15] E.g., Mitthof and Papathomas 1994.

Nevertheless, and much to his credit, one of Wessely's special interests was the Fayyum's topography, and in *SPP* X, which appeared in 1910, he edited a series of papyri under the title 'Greek Texts on the Topography of Egypt' (*Griechische Texte zur Topographie Ägyptens*).[16] This volume included topographically significant pieces from elsewhere, but mostly from the Fayyum. Many of these were lists of villages[17] assigned by Wessely to the seventh–eighth century, apparently post-dating the Arab conquest. Among these were quite a few that were alphabetical, including several fragmentary lists of villages beginning in alpha. These have for the past several years been studied by Federico Morelli with some interesting results.[18] First, in some of the lists, it appears that the alpha villages come in a prescribed order (the alphabetical principle does not extend beyond the initial letter, so another principle must be involved). The most important of these, *SPP* X 40, which survives in one nearly complete column, lists twenty-one villages in alpha followed *immediately* by two villages in beta, at which point the papyrus breaks off. It is Morelli's understanding, with which I concur, that *SPP* X 40's twenty-one villages in alpha are complete. Accordingly, village names in alpha in seventh- and eighth-century Fayyum papyri that do not as published replicate any of the village names on the *SPP* X 40 master list are likely to be false readings, or they appear on papyri wrongly assigned to the Arsinoite nome.

At base then are twenty-one Fayyum villages of the late Byzantine period that begin in alpha. If Morelli's experiment could be continued through other alphabetical lists of Fayyum villages, it would be possible to calculate the exact number of Fayyum villages in the late Byzantine period. But though such lists do exist, they are fewer and even more fragmentary than the alpha lists. It is a fact of papyrological life that documents are most often fragmentary; when they do survive as larger fragments we tend, in my impression, to get their beginnings (e.g., the alpha lists at issue here) or their ends, far less often their middles. So it is that the longest surviving alphabetical list of Fayyum villages, *SPP* X 239 = XX 229,[19] records villages

[16] See also Wessely 1904, fully sensitive to the Coptic and Arabic evidence.

[17] I use the term villages very broadly. The Greek term applied to them is usually *chôrion*, strictly speaking a unit for tax assessment and collection; but it is clear that each *chôrion* was at the same time a village or hamlet, in any case, a rural settlement with its own physical space. Cf. Banaji 2001, esp. Appendix 3, pp. 241–50.

[18] Morelli 2004. I am grateful to the author for generously sharing the results of his research and providing a copy of his article in advance of publication.

[19] Discussed at the Twenty-fourth International Congress of Papyrology, Helsinki, 1–7 August 2004, under the title 'Fayyum Villages in *SPP* XX 229'. I omit from consideration a fragmentary fourth column, which records more villages (and a few repetitions from cols. i–iii), but not as part of the alphabetical sequence.

from the second half of the alphabet, nu to omega, in three columns; the first half of the list, perhaps five or six columns' worth, is lost. Nevertheless, fifty-nine village names survive in this half-list, one which by the very peculiarities of its formatting admits its own incompleteness: one village name is a late addition in the top margin of the first column; spaces between letters have been left for late insertions in the first two columns; and there is plenty of space for additions at the bottoms of all three columns. In sum, the mere combination of *SPP* X 40 and X 239 = XX 229 cols. i–iii yields the names of eighty-two villages and only 'the alphas' are complete.

The point here is that if an accurate count of Fayyum villages (including hamlets) in the Byzantine–early Islamic period could be achieved by Morelli's process, the result would likely be a master list that would equal in numbers the 145 villages estimated for the Ptolemaic period but perhaps not reach the nearly 200 rural settlements found in al-Nabulsi's thirteenth-century Arabic description of the Fayyum.[20]

Of course, numbers tell us nothing about size, population, or prosperity, and surely give nothing like the three rural vignettes with which this chapter began. To find these, it will be necessary to look elsewhere, first to the village of Alabastrine of the Antinoite nome. A rare glimpse at this true Byzantine Egyptian village was presented in the 1992 publication by Traianos Gagos and Peter van Minnen of three Michigan papyri under the title 'Documenting the Rural Economy of Byzantine Egypt'.[21] The village of Alabastrine, by its very name, suggests quarries and quarrying activity, but these are not the concern of the papyri in question. Two are sales of land, one is a lease of building property. All three date to about AD 425. In the longest of the three documents, the first sale of land, a woman landowner, Aurelia Juliana, sells agricultural land inherited from her father to a village sailor, Aurelius Serenus, for twenty-five solidi. The extent of the property is not specified (a blank has been left in line 5 for its later insertion), but it included so-called dry land, a cistern, and a walled-in enclosure. I understand this complex as indicating, in sum, an orchard with the means to irrigate it. The land, before her father owned it, had belonged to the villagers of Terythis Ebythis of the Hermopolite nome. Even more interesting, current adjacent property included land owned by another villager of Alabastrine (on the north), land owned by the *koinon*, or association, of the villagers of Teuo Neaniskou of the Hermopolite nome (on the west), land owned by a villager of Teuo Neaniskou (on the south), and a cistern

[20] Thompson 2001: 1257 (number of Ptolemaic settlements); König 1995–6. Whether the 117 villages not attested in Greek papyri before the fifth century were new settlements (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001: 73), or simply pre-existing but unattested, can only be solved on a case-by-case basis – if at all.

[21] Gagos and van Minnen 1992.

owned by the *synodos* of the village of Alabastrine (on the east). The editors of the Alabastrine papyri were much impressed by the apparent frequency of village communal property ownership as evidenced here, going so far as to suggest that 'the σύνοδος of Alabastrine may well be regarded as the forerunner of the agricultural cooperatives of present-day Egypt' (p. 189).

Not everyone would agree, though the matter is surely an important one for how decisions were made on the village level.[22] As expressed by an eminent economic historian, 'an organization for making and implementing communal decisions is an absolute prerequisite for a viable agricultural community'.[23] Unfortunately, space does not allow for closer attention to this issue or to the details of the other two Alabastrine papyri; but it is worth noting in passing that the property rented out by Juliana to Serenus in the third one is a storage room (*kella*) on the third floor of the building in question, a telltale hint at the nucleation and verticality of Egyptian housing, even in villages. This is in conformity with what is known of the archaeology of the domestic architecture of places like the already mentioned Karanis, and like Kellis (in the Dakhla Oasis) in the fourth century, and later (sixth–ninth century) at Jeme, a Coptic town established in the enclosure of the mortuary temple of Ramesses III on the Nile's west bank across from Luxor.[24] Though Jeme's house plans varied greatly, as at Karanis and Kellis, they had the same general character and ambiance: they were multi-storeyed and set in a tightly packed environment. The notional village environment – though this is evidenced more for Karanis than for Jeme – besides including other houses, included 'granaries, threshing floors, bakeries, dovecotes, pottery works'.[25] In our period, churches would also have figured prominently on the village scene.[26]

Not far from the village of Alabastrine and Juliana's three-storeyed house, though across the Nile, lay the village of Temseu Skordon of the Hermopolite nome, the main concern of an extensive documentary codex in the British Library (*P.Lond.Copt.* 1075).[27] In forty pages (the first one now lost) were recorded cash tax payments in instalments by individual villagers of

[22] See the fiscal, rather than communitarian, model argued for by Bonneau 1983.

[23] North 1981: 93.

[24] The evidence is conveniently summarized by Alston 2002: 52–8 (Karanis), 105–7 (Kellis), 119 (Jeme). For Jeme, see also Wilfong 2002: 8–11, 117–19, and *passim*, with relevant plates (1, 3) and figures (2, 4, 7).

[25] Bagnall 1993: 111–13 (quote from 113) and pl. 4 (Karanis, Level A). Cf. Wilfong 2002, esp. 11–12.

[26] *CAH* XIV.619–20 (Karanis, Aphrodite – textual evidence); Wilfong 2002: 12–13, 24, and *passim* (Jeme – archaeological and textual evidence); Keenan 2003: 132–4 (Tebtunis – nutshell summary of archaeological evidence).

[27] The codex, with its twenty-seven leaves, was transcribed by Leslie S. B. MacCoull and, with introduction, text and translation, notes and commentary, privately circulated. An edition for formal publication is currently in preparation by MacCoull, Roger Bagnall, and me.

Temseu Skordon (and occasionally other places), with surviving dates running from Thoth 29 to Pachon 20 of an indictional year in the sixth century. Other codex pages concern arrears of Temseu Skordon and payments made by inhabitants of a place called 'topos Demeou'.

The codex contains a wealth of prosopographical information, including more than 300 individual taxpayers for Temseu Skordon, sixteen of them women (presumably female heads of households). Sometimes taxpayers are identified in the codex by their trades, as vinedressers, or 'vineyard specialists',[28] bakers, fullers, oil-factors, cooks, carpenters, tanners, smiths. For the topos Demeou there are some thirty-seven taxpayers, two of them women. It seems that this must have been a small village or hamlet, while Temseu Skordon, with a population that probably exceeded a thousand and a fair diversity of occupations, must have been rather large.

In a sense, the codex, long as it is, tells both so much and yet so little about the village and hamlet with which it is concerned. In fact, the only Byzantine Egyptian village to rival the villages of the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyum for wealth of evidence is the Middle Egyptian village of Aphrodite, the modern Kom Ishqau. Two great finds were made there at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1901 the villagers came upon an early eighth-century archive, the bilingual Greek–Arabic papers often concerned with correspondence between the Arab emir Qorraḥ ibn Sharik and the pagarch Flavius Basilius. Several years later, in 1905, the villagers discovered the famous jar with the library and papers, Greek and Coptic, of Flavius Dioskoros, sixth-century landowner, lawyer, and poet. A substantial portion of the Dioskoros papers was somehow recovered for the Cairo Museum, but as is always the case with such clandestine finds, a substantial portion made its way onto the antiquities market and was dispersed far and wide. The British Museum acquired a major share through purchase, but many other institutions and libraries acquired pieces; some even fell into private hands.[29]

The story of Aphrodite, a large village[30] downgraded from city status, has often been sketched, usually through a framework provided by the biographies of the archive's principal figures, Dioskoros, of course, but also his father Apollos, an upwardly mobile local worthy who toward his life's end founded and perhaps retired to a monastery.[31] Dioskoros' poetical work was

[28] See Mayerson 2003.

[29] There is no definitive account of the discoveries; for attempts at partial reconstruction, see Keenan 1984a and Kuehn 1995: 42–7.

[30] Whether as 'a town-like village' it was larger than its nome capital, Antaiopolis (cf. Liebeschuetz 2001: 145, 65), is hard to say.

[31] See, e.g., Kuehn 1995: 52–76 (with bibliography); Keenan 1984b.

brought to wider scholarly and popular attention in 1988 by Leslie MacCoull's book, *Dioscorus of Aphrodito: His Work and His World*. More recently, Jean-Luc Fournet, in a massive two-volume work,[32] has re-edited the poems with extensive commentary and made great progress in assembling and analyzing the works in Dioskoros' library, including his manuscripts of Homer and relevant scholia. The village's special position, the right of collecting its own taxes (*autopragia*) conferred by the emperor Leo in the fifth century, its patronage under the empress Theodora and, following her death, under Justinian himself, its troubles with the pagarchs (regional government officials), its embassies to Constantinople – all these have been much discussed.[33] Instead of reconsidering these topics here, I would like to look once more at a seemingly secondary figure from Aphrodite named Aurelius Phoibammon, son of Triadelphos, whose 'biography' has been revealed in increasingly significant detail over the past twenty-five years.

This is a story that starts quietly in 1915 with the publication of the first papyrus to mention Phoibammon, from Florence, followed in 1917 by three more, from the British Museum. Not until 1935 did a fifth Phoibammon document get published, from a Russian collection. All five were unprepossessing pieces: rent receipts with Phoibammon as the rent payer. None was datable in absolute terms. It was not until 1955, with the publication of the Michaelides papyri, then housed in Cairo, that Phoibammon emerged as a distinctive individual, figuring in eight of them.[34] These included a sale of pasturage, with Phoibammon as buyer; the lease of a farm, with Phoibammon as co-lessor; another lease (very fragmentary), with Phoibammon as sole lessor; a lease of pastures, with Phoibammon as (once again) co-lessor; yet another rent receipt with Phoibammon as payer; and a fragmentary contract of indeterminate type in which Phoibammon's participation is certain but his role is not.

Clearly, with the sale and the leases, the documentation about Phoibammon was gaining in variety, but the Michaelides papyri also established definite chronological limits. The latest Phoibammon document dated to

[32] Fournet 1999.

[33] E.g., Geraci 1979; Migliardi Zingale 1984–5, with due attention to the legal sources. For a capsule sketch of the village: *CAH* XIV.633–6.

[34] *P.Michael.* 43–50. For the dispersal of the collection after George Michaelides' death in 1973, see Clackson 1994. Part of one of the Michaelides Phoibammon papyri came to the Cambridge University Library; the remainder of that document and five others to the British Library; two are unaccounted for. Coincidentally, just as the Dumbarton Oaks Symposium was about to open, some Michaelides papyri, with other antiquities, were sold at auction by Christies, South Kensington, London, 28 April 2004 (sale 9832, lot 360). They were described (christies.com) as having been 'legally exported from Egypt in the 1940s'. As yet unknown is whether the missing Phoibammon papyri were among the items sold.

AD 572; the earliest two documents, which have not yet been mentioned, to AD 526 and 527 respectively. The first of these (*P.Michael.* 43) was a complex arrangement, in effect a double contract. In its first half Phoibammon leases from a soldier named Flavius Samuel a twenty-eight-aroura farm; in its second half, Phoibammon lends Samuel eighteen gold solidi and fifty-eight artabas of wheat. Without going into further detail, I would only say that the combined terms of the double contract were very favourable to Phoibammon. The next year, AD 527 (*P.Michael.* 44), Samuel borrowed another eighteen artabas of wheat from Phoibammon. The Michaelides editor sensed that Samuel was falling into a debt trap and began to wonder 'if the debt were ever repaid, or if the land [apparently the twenty-eight-aroura farm now under mortgage as guarantee for the loans] eventually became Phoibammon's own property'.

There matters sat for more than twenty years until 1977 with the publication of *P.Mich.* XIII. Four more Phoibammon papyri were added to the mix, including a rent receipt of familiar format with Phoibammon (again) as the rent payer. But most important of the four Michigan papyri was a third agreement between Phoibammon and Samuel (*P.Mich.* XIII 670), probably the second in the series. It was another loan of wheat, this time for thirty artabas, again alluding to the security of mortgages on a farm. Like the Michaelides editor, the Michigan editor expressed concern and felt that by the time of his last loan from Phoibammon Samuel must have been 'too deeply in debt to think he would ever be able to repay the amounts borrowed'. In sum, the three Phoibammon–Samuel contracts showed, in the words of the Michigan editor, 'how a small farmer [Samuel] gradually lost his property to a rich landowner [Phoibammon]'.

When I first read this over twenty-five years ago I sensed something was amiss. To start with, Phoibammon had the common status designation Aurelius, Samuel the more dignified Flavius. Samuel was not a 'small farmer': he was a soldier, an absentee, and the twenty-eight-aroura farm, though not massive, was hardly small. In turn, Phoibammon did not seem even remotely like the type of great landlord familiar from the pages of E. R. Hardy's *Large Estates of Byzantine Egypt* (New York 1931). If he was so rich, why did he appear so often as a rent-paying lessee? The problem was to resolve the seeming contradiction of the man who often appeared in the apparently weaker position as rent-paying lessee *and* in the stronger positions of land purchaser and lessor, and lender of money and wheat. A clue seemed to lie with Phoibammon's landlords: they were more than half the time ecclesiastical institutions (churches, monasteries, a religious hostel). Further, it seemed that Phoibammon managed several leaseholds at

any given time; he was no ordinary tenant farmer. Instead I came to see him as an energetic middleman, an 'entrepreneur', and presented him as such in an article published in 1980.[35] As Roger Bagnall later put it, Phoibammon had been 'a figure absent from the traditional rural mythology [*sc.* of landlord and peasant]: the entrepreneur of middling means, owning some land himself, leasing land from others, sometimes subleasing what he took from others, lending money and produce – sometimes in return for leverage or the chance of foreclosing, and through wit and industry accumulating capital that he can invest in further such transactions'.[36]

At the end of the article on Phoibammon I engaged in a series of speculations, the riskiest of which was that Phoibammon may have 'had little or no family, possibly therefore only his own mouth to feed'. This was immediately proven wrong by the virtually simultaneous publication of a Phoibammon papyrus in the Vatican Library (*P.Vat.Aphrod.* 10)[37] from which it was clear that Phoibammon indeed had a wife, named Anastasia, also known as Tekrompia ('the Dove'), and through her a connection by marriage with Apollos (her uncle on her mother's side) and Dioskoros (her first cousin). This was reinforced in 1994 when Traianos Gagos and Peter van Minnen republished the Vatican papyrus in combination with a much better preserved one in Michigan (P.Mich.inv. 6922), producing a text well over a hundred lines long. They did so under the title *Settling a Dispute: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Late Antique Egypt*. As a party to the settlement in question, Phoibammon, along with his wife, ends up paying an indemnity in cash (seven solidi) and kind (twenty artabas of wheat) in order to redeem from mortgage a vineyard they had bought whose seller had earlier pledged it as security for a loan. The upshot of course is that, with this outlay of liquid capital, Phoibammon and Anastasia-Tekrompia now had clear title to the vineyard. The agreement was reached at what the editors call 'the local civil courthouse' in Antinoopolis, the provincial capital. Phoibammon and Anastasia-Tekrompia were not themselves present for the negotiations, but were represented by none other than Apollos, father of Dioskoros, and Anastasia-Tekrompia's uncle.

Both before and after 1994 other documents about Phoibammon reached publication. In 1989 Rosario Pintaudi and the late Piet Sijpesteijn published some papyri from the British Library, including five from Aphrodite. In one Phoibammon acts as agent, in another as co-agent, for the payment of village taxes by Apollos, son of Dioskoros (the famous Dioskoros' father). In

[35] Keenan 1980. [36] Bagnall 1995: 41–3 (quote: 43).
[37] See Jean Gascou's review in *Aegyptus* 61 (1981) 274–81, at 277–8.

yet another papyrus, as one of (at least) four village headmen Phoibammon is credited for a payment of fifty-four solidi.[38] In 1997 Traianos Gagos published another receipt in which Phoibammon again served as agent for Apollos' payment of taxes.[39]

Such receipts have year dates by indiction only. Apollos is known to have died in AD 546/7, so all three editors reasonably assumed that the receipts they published belonged to indictional years during Apollos' lifetime. (The specifically proposed dates need not concern us here.) But Jean-Luc Fournet, in 2000, in the course of publishing yet another such receipt, this one from Berlin, assembled all known receipts (thirteen in all) in which Apollos made payments through agents. It turns out that in these Apollos was *only* represented either by his own son, Dioskoros, or by Phoibammon, his kinsman by marriage, never the two expressly named together. The lone exception is an instance when he was represented by his unnamed heirs. Fournet proceeds from this to conclude that the receipts all post-date 546/7 and that the 'heirs' were none other than Dioskoros and Phoibammon. Based on the proportions of the payments made for Apollos through their respective agencies, he suggests that Dioskoros, the son, was heir to two thirds of his father's estate, Phoibammon, the kinsman by marriage, to one third.[40] If, then, the papers of Apollos–Dioskoros and Phoibammon represented perhaps two separate archives, separately preserved and separately recovered,[41] one large, one modest in size, they now also seemed to mesh together as one grand dossier.

Finally, in the late 1990s, Roger Bagnall was asked for his expertise on a papyrus held in a private collection in New Jersey. On inspection and conservation, it proved to be yet another Phoibammon papyrus, this time a division of property (subsequently published as *P.Bingen* 130). On one side of the transaction were Phoibammon and a brother named Kollouthos, new to the Phoibammon archive (another brother, Paulos, was previously known from *P.Michael.* 57); on the other side, the sisters Aurelia Elisabeth and Aurelia Eudoxia, otherwise unknown. The two sides agree to divide a house into halves – but this seems to have been no ordinary village house. It had a vaulted storage room (*kamara*), a special storage room for bread (*artothêkê*) with a floor above it, a grand reception room (*andrôn*) on an upper floor, and perhaps another reception room above a gateway entrance (*pylôn*), and one or two open-air courtyards (*aithrion*, *exaithra*). The date is unfortunately lost.

[38] Pintaudi and Sijpesteijn 1989. See nos. 1–5, esp. 1, 2, and 5 (= *SB* XVI 15013, 15015, and 15018, respectively). Cf. Pintaudi and Sijpesteijn 1990 (see now *SB* XX 14119–24).
[39] Gagos 1997. [40] Fournet 2000. [41] Fournet 2001: 475 n. 2.

Phoibammon now emerges not merely as an entrepreneur – giving and taking leases, buying land, lending money and produce, probably foreclosing on a twenty-eight-aroura farm – but also as a man acquiring with his wife ownership of a vineyard, perhaps inheriting a third of her uncle's estate, and gaining with his brother a half-share of an obviously upscale house, a house just possibly to be reckoned among those apparently elaborate houses of Aphrodite's 'ancient great landowners' mentioned in one of Aphrodite's most famous documents.[42] The result is a dilemma. In the 1980 article Phoibammon was presented as an entrepreneur *gradually* advancing economically, and socially, over a term of nearly fifty years. Ten years later he still seemed to be, and was presented as, a 'rational peasant'.[43] Today, as a result of the accumulation of new evidence, he still seems to have been 'rational' and entrepreneurial, but his peasant status has come into doubt. He may after all these twists and turns have been much closer to the 'rich landowner' the Michigan editor thought he was. This, of course, as Roger Bagnall pointed out in the discussion after the oral presentation of this chapter, raises the question of what exactly is meant by 'rich', in structural (at least) if not in absolute terms. The answer seems to be, roughly, that Phoibammon would not have ranked as especially rich among the urban elite, but was surely a man of means in his own village, still a peasant but an extraordinarily successful one, or – better – a prosperous 'farmer'.[44]

This then brings us full circle to a concern expressed towards the beginning of this chapter, namely, the elite bias of the papyrological evidence. From this just concluded exploration of the piecemeal rediscovery, publication, and assessment of Phoibammon's papers, it seems that the evidence for Aphrodite, the only shot for a book-length study of a Byzantine Egyptian village to rival those possible for the earlier villages of the Fayyum, is also tainted with an elite bias. The only way through the problem is, I suppose, to try to read the evidence upside down, structurally, synchronically, somehow divorced from the careers of the village's elite: Apollos and Dioskoros, and now Phoibammon, son of Triadelphos. The task will require plausible reconstructions from an historian conversant in the literature and techniques of anthropology, who is at the same time a trained papyrologist in full control of the ever-increasing and diversifying evidence from Aphrodite – a demanding but perhaps not impossible assignment.[45]

[42] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002, at II 24 (with thanks to Todd Hickey for this reminder). See below for this important text.
[43] Keenan 1991: 166, partly influenced by a reading of Popkin 1979.
[44] For the distinction between peasant and farmer, Crone 2003: 21.
[45] Historian-anthropologist: Humphreys 1991: chapter 12, 284–308, esp. at 308; papyrologist specializing in Aphrodite: Fournet 2001: 484.

The best point of departure for the recommended reconstructions may, for structural purposes, be the 300-line-plus cadastre of Aphrodite in the Freer Gallery of Art published by Jean Gascou and Leslie MacCoull in 1987.[46] But two of the first-published documentary papyri from Aphrodite, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67001 and 67002, would still provide the liveliest points of entry to some of the village's essentials – its organization, its troubles – and return us to the vignettes with which this chapter opened. The first, dated to AD 514, is, like the Alabastrine papyri treated above, instructive about the village's communal organizations. It is an agreement between the association (*koinotês*) of village headmen, taxpayers, and landowners with the association (*koinon*) of shepherds and field guards. The latter promise to guard the village's estates (*ktêmata*), including livestock and agricultural machinery, from damage or theft, and to redeem any future losses. The field-guarding shepherds thereby formalize an understanding that had been customary, as they put it, 'from the time of our fathers and forefathers'.[47] The second document is a lengthy, undated petition to the Duke of the Thebaid from his 'most pitiable slaves and wretched smallholders and householders of the all-wretched village of Aphrodite', who turn out to be thirteen in number. During their annual excursion to the livestock market at Thynis,[48] where they were wont to sell their animals 'for the support of us and our children', they were ambushed by certain administrators and thrown in jail. Transferred from the jail at Thynis to the jail in Antinoopolis (the provincial capital) and then to the jail at Antaiopolis (the nome capital), they endured insults, extortion attempts under torture, and ten months' confinement. Their animals were sequestered, the best confiscated; the remaining donkeys and some camels, 'half-dead', had to be repurchased at auction. And the troubles did not end there.

Though not in exact particulars, the complaints of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 nevertheless call to mind the mid-fifth century complaints Shenoute of Atripe levels against Gesios, a local noble of Panopolis, in a polemical sermon, 'Not Because a Fox Barks'. Shenoute speaks in behalf of the local peasants, charging Gesios with having committed all sorts of outrages, accusing him, literally, of persecution, of driving people through fright from their houses, carrying off their beasts along with their carts and hay, stealing bread and wine, and filching fodder, hay, and barley for his own cattle. Elsewhere, in confrontations of a different character, villagers, through

[46] Gascou and MacCoull 1987. See now Zuckerman 2004. [47] Cf. Keenan 1985: 254–8.

[48] Whether the livestock market at Thynis, a village of the Hermopolite nome, occurred during the annual festival in the same village is unclear, and has not to my knowledge been previously proposed. See Mandilaras 1991.

magic and violence respectively, resist the Christian missionary efforts of Shenoute himself and of Makarios of Tkow.

These incidents are graphically presented and analyzed by David Frankfurter, with the last two singled out as examples of 'tendencies toward defensive solidarity [attributable] to the very nature of the little or local tradition as epitomized in . . . the village'.[49] They and Shenoute's sermon suggest a largely untapped, never systematically exploited source for our subject of villages: the writings of the monks in general, including the 'Sayings of the Fathers', and of Shenoute and Besa, in particular, especially since most of those who entered their White Monastery reputedly 'came from the poverty-stricken peasantry, the *fellahîn*, of Upper Egypt'. Even more to the point, Shenoute himself was the son of a farmer in a village of the Panopolite nome (his father also owned some sheep) and he often spoke forcibly, as in the example above, in favour of members of his class.[50] Some of this material raises along the way concerns about the *mentalité* of Egyptian villagers in the Byzantine period, something rarely explicitly witnessed in the papyri. A potentially interesting exception, unless this was merely a colourful way of identifying a 'no-fault divorce', would be the belief that marital discord leading to divorce could be attributable to an 'evil demon'.[51] Finally, the Shenoute materials, together with the story of the travails of Aphrodite, remind us of the kinds of village disruptions, small and large, sketched at the beginning of this chapter. Besa's *Life*, for example, presents the minor disruption of the mother-camel who refuses to allow her foal to milk (ch. 161) – a miracle story – and the more serious case of murder committed on the village threshing floor (chapters 14–16), with robbery the motive.

In this connection, recall especially the water rights dispute in the Copenhagen papyrus from Karanis (*P.Haun.* III 58), opening vignette number 3,

[49] Frankfurter 1998: 77–82, 66–70, in the latter passage quoting anthropologist James C. Scott, 'Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition', *Theory and Society* 4 (1977): 1–38, 211–46, at 213, but also bearing in mind anthropologist Robert Redfield's 'heuristic notion of a "great tradition" in dialectic with a "little tradition"' – Frankfurter 1998: 6 and *passim*. For the identity of Gesios (otherwise Gessius or Gessios), *praeses* of the Thebaid in the late 370s, and an extensive reconstruction of the whole Gesios affair substantially different from Frankfurter's, see Emmel 2002: 99ff.

[50] For Shenoute, in brief: Barns 1964. For Besa: the introduction to Bell 1983. (The quote in the preceding sentence is from Bell, p. 10.) Shenoute's father: Besa's *Life* chapter 3.

[51] Frankfurter 1998: 260–1, citing *P.Lond.* V 1713 (AD 569), which is a duplicate of *P.Flor.* I 93; but the document in question was not drafted in Aphrodite (a village) but in Antinoopolis (the provincial capital), and both divorcing parties were from the city. The same applies, for example, to *P.Lond.* V 1712 of the same year. See, however, *P.Cair.Masp* I 67121 (AD 573) from Aphrodite itself, alluding in line 9 to the malign influence of an evil demon (*ponêros daimôn*) on the marriage of a village doctor and his wife.

and the violent resistance to tax collection evidenced in the less prominently featured Columbia papyrus from the same village (*P.Col.* VIII 242). Of course, intervillage disputes over water rights were nothing new, nor was resistance to tax collection.[52] These incidents may then be treated as archetypal incidents, examples of chronic rural dilemmas, instances of traditional village solidarity both against other villages and against the outside world (government tax agents).[53] But the two Karanis incidents can be, and have been, taken as signs of a village in its death throes.[54] If that is so, they raise questions about change over time.

For years, the common presumption has been that Egyptian peasant and village life were changeless, from the pharaohs down to the construction of the Aswan High Dam.[55] But Richard Alston's book on Egyptian cities ends with a strong assertion of change, at least with respect to the structural relationship between cities and villages.[56] According to Alston, cities were the focal points of Roman and late Roman Egypt; but in the Byzantine period, essentially the period as defined in this volume, cities declined: they were, so to speak, 'decentred' (my word), they became 'less distinctive' owing largely to the full Christianization of city and country. 'The citizens were reintegrated with the villagers, now all Christians together, and the boundary between urban and rural ceased to have much meaning.' Wealth (e.g., that of monasteries and the houses of great landlords) 'perhaps' gravitated to the countryside, but the countryside and its villages did not necessarily prosper accordingly: those villages which had been in a 'virtuous circle of economic development' (347) with their respective cities, even partly economically integrated with them, shared in the urban decline. To survive, they 'had to return to a non-commercialized, non-urbanocentric farming and to adjust to a new world, with perhaps more localized political and economic structures, in which the cities perhaps played a less pivotal role'. The suggested pattern of decline is a 'ragged' one, focused on the seventh century, but running from the sixth to the ninth.[57]

[52] Water rights: Anagnostou-Canas 2001; tax resistance: *P.Tebt.* I 38 (113 BC), 39 (114 BC), IV 1094 (undated but *c.* 114/3 BC). These cases involve smuggled oil, contrary to the interests of the Ptolemaic royal monopoly and those of the tax-farmer with the relevant contract. Violence flares in the second case.

[53] Scott *apud* Frankfurter, 1998: 70 (see above n. 49). [54] Van Minnen 1995: 50–4.

[55] A classic presentation: Ayrout 1963 (French original: *Moeurs et coutumes des fellahs*, 1938).

[56] Alston 2002, esp. the concluding 366–7.

[57] Cf. Liebeschuetz 2001, esp. 63 (greater prominence of villages in late antiquity), 73 (villages perhaps benefit from a redistribution of wealth from cities in late antiquity: 'It is conceivable, and perhaps even likely, that more wealthy people had their main residences in villages than had been the case in earlier times, and that more wealth was spent in the countryside, not least the income of monasteries').

These are bold and sweeping conclusions, written mainly from the perspective of the cities, and with an air of speculation – note the two 'perhapses' in the last paragraph's citations. Whether they would be erased by a close consideration of evidence concerned (strictly) with the villages, or (more broadly) with the villages in relation to cities, remains to be seen. It is uncertain whether there is evidence sufficient in quantity and quality to support such a project.

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CHAPTER 12

The imperial presence: Government and army

Bernhard Palme

INTRODUCTION

When Diocletian spent more than a year – from autumn 297 to the end of 298 – in the land of the Nile and visited again in the spring of the year 302, these were the last occasions on which a Roman emperor travelled to Egypt in person. Egypt was sheltered from the political and military developments of the stormy centuries of late antiquity.[1] Until the invasion by a Sassanid army in 618/9, which brought the country under Persian rule for approximately ten years, it was the religious conflicts which caused the greatest turbulence in Egypt, particularly in Alexandria, where the tumultuous events of the year 398/9 even cost the governor Anatolius his life, and the disturbances of 451 and 536 were practically on the scale of full-blown rebellions. As a productive country, Egypt was of the highest importance to the empire for its reliable generation of tax income, especially in the form of grain. Each year Egypt had to send approximately eight million artabas to Constantinople.[2] The food supply of the capital and the never-ending wars against the Persians in Mesopotamia and Syria critically depended on Egypt's punctual and complete payment of her taxes. The smooth administration of the country and a loyal military were in the vital interests of the imperial government.

How did the court at the distant Bosporus ensure this? In Egypt the papyrological evidence, in combination with the other sources, affords a relatively detailed insight into the institutions of the imperial government, their development, and their functioning. As literary and legal sources for the history of Egypt in the fifth and sixth centuries are scattered, the documentary papyri are of particular importance, even though their evidential

[1] General overviews of early Byzantine Egypt are Keenan 2000 and Gascou 2004. For the roots of numerous developments in the preceding period (*c.* 300–450), cf. Bagnall 1993.

[2] Justinian, *Ed.* 13.8 (539), ed. R. Schoell and W. Kroll, *Corpus iuris civilis* III: *Novellae* (sixth edn., Berlin 1954) 780–95: at a ratio of one artaba = approx. thirty-nine litres, the total volume will be about 312,000,000 litres.

force is limited and one-sided.[3] Only a fraction of these derive from civilian and military departments and even these mostly concern transactions of lesser importance, in which imperial events are at most mentioned in passing. The papyri originate from a handful of locations and are dominated by individual archives or dossiers, mostly of private documents and of questionable typicality. The history of the government and the army thus appears in our sources as a history of administrators and soldiers. We must be aware that what we are attempting is practically the reconstruction of the structures of state power on the basis of private legal contracts and the papers of local fiscal offices.

CIVIL AND MILITARY ORGANIZATION

For an examination of the institutional framework of imperial power, besides the papyrological and epigraphic sources, the law codes and the *Notitia Dignitatum* (a schematic handbook of the offices and troops in the Eastern and Western empire) are available to us. As an independent diocese from around AD 381, Egypt exhibits the typical post-Diocletian division between civilian and military authority which had been in effect since approximately 308 throughout the empire.[4] The *Not. Dign.* (the *pars Orientis* of which can be dated to around AD 401)[5] offers itself as a convenient starting point for an overview of both the civilian administration and the military apparatus.

According to *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 23.1–14, the diocese Aegyptus consists of six provinces: Aegyptus, Augustamnica, Arcadia, Thebais, as well as Libya Superior (= Pentapolis) and Libya Inferior (= Libya Sicca); the two Libyas are not going to be considered here. In contrast with the fourth century, which saw a series of short-term experiments in the province's organization, this arrangement remained stable for a considerable time: half a century later in his *Laterculus* of 448, Polemius Silvius reports the situation as unchanged. The borders of the Byzantine provinces were not random but often followed older regional divisions, also manifested, for example, in Coptic dialects. Each province was under the authority of a *praeses* except Augustamnica, which had a *corrector*. All six governors were subject to a *praefectus Augustalis*, who, having the rank of *vicarius*, was responsible for the whole diocese (**Fig. 12.1**).

[3] Cf. the observations previously made by Rémondon 1966, Bagnall and Worp 1980: 13–23, and Habermann 1998: 147–51.

[4] On the organization of the province in the fourth century, see Palme 1998: 128–9.

[5] *Notitia Dignitatum*, ed. O. Seeck (Berlin 1876); on the date of the *pars Orientis*, cf. Zuckerman 1998b: 146–7.

298–314/5	314/5–322	322–324	324–341	341–374–381	381–397	ca. 397–ca. 500	before 535	ca. 539–619	629–640
Aegyptus *praefectus*	Aegyptus Iovia *praeses*	Aegyptus Iovia *praeses*	Aegyptus *praefectus*	Aegyptus *praefectus*	Aegyptus *praeses*	Aegyptus *praeses*	Aegyptus ***Augustalis***	Aegyptus I *dux & Augustalis* Aegyptus II *praeses*	Aegyptus *dux & Augustalis*
	Aegyptus Herculia *praeses*	Aegyptus Herculia *praeses*		Augustamnica *praeses*	Augustamnica *corrector*	Augustamnica *corrector*	Augustamnica I *corrector* Augustamnica II *praeses*	Augustamnica I *dux & Augustalis* Augustamnica II *praeses*	Augustamnica *dux & Augustalis*
		Aegyptus Mercuriana *praeses*				Arcadia *praeses*	Arcadia *praeses*	Arcadia *praeses*	Arcadia *dux et Augustalis*
Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais *praeses*	Thebais inferior *praeses* Thebais superior *dux*	Thebais inferior *praeses* Thebais superior *dux & Augustalis*	Thebais *dux & Augustalis*
					Augustalis	***Augustalis***			

Figure 12.1 The provinces of early Byzantine Egypt.

As for the military organization, since the time of the Tetrarchy all Egypt and Libya had been under the command of a single *dux*.[6] This shows that the division into smaller provinces did not come from fear of a concentration of power in the hands of local governors. Probably soon after the creation of the diocese and the *Augustalis* (381), the military command was also remodelled: from 391 a *comes limitis Aegypti* is attested as being responsible for Lower Egypt (Aegyptus, Arcadia, and Augustamnica), to whom a *dux Thebaidis* in charge of Upper Egypt was subject.[7] By this reorganization, the position and status of the military commander of all Egypt became equivalent to those of the civilian *Augustalis*. He was perhaps the most powerful individual in the country, to whom poets wrote *encomia*.[8] From the middle of the fifth century, the military commander of the Thebais was also promoted from *dux Thebaidis* to *comes Thebaici limitis*.[9]

According to the reorganization of the army by Diocletian and Constantine, the *duces* were the commanders of the *limitanei*, which were the territorial units stationed permanently in individual ducates. The command over the *comitatenses* (superior troops) lay, however, in the hands of the *magister militum per Orientem* (*Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 7), and the command over the *palatini* (the elite units of the imperial court) rested with the two *magistri militum praesentales* of the eastern half of the Roman empire.[10] Thus, the troops stationed in each province had, according to their individual status, three different commanders. Such a tripartite command structure had major drawbacks in the event of an external attack, as any counteraction required major efforts in terms of coordination and communication. Therefore, the emperor Anastasius ordered (*Cod. Just.* 12.35.18) that the *praesentales* stationed in a ducate were also to be commanded by the *dux*,

[6] The first known holder of this military office was Aurelius Maximus, who bore the title of *dux Aegypti et Thebaidos utrarumque Libyarum* (*AE* 1934, 7 and 8, from 308/9; see Rémondon 1965a: 186 no. 1).

[7] The last attestation of a *dux* in charge of all Egypt is found in *Cod. Theod.* 11.30.43 of 20 October 384. The new order can be seen for the first time in *Cod. Theod.* 16.10.11 of 16 June 391. Between 384 and 391 the title *dux Aegypti* was changed to *comes limitis Aegypti*. Details of the military organization are problematic: see Rémondon 1965a: 180–97; Zuckerman 1998b: 138; Carrié 1998: 106–15.

[8] Cyrus of Antaiopolis wrote an iambic poem addressed to Mauricius, *dux Aegypti*, in *c.* 367–75, see Gascou 1998: 61–4; Andronicus, a *curialis* of Cynopolis, dedicated a poetic work to *comes* Phoibammon, probably *dux* about 412, see Gonis 2005: 87–8; Dioskoros of Aphrodite composed several poems for the military commanders of the Thebaid, Athanasius, Callinicus, and Ioannes, cf. Fournet 1999: I.326–36.

[9] Carrié 1998: 115. The first *comes Thebaici limitis* was Fl. Sabinus Antiochus Damonicus: *I. Philae* II 194 (449–68) and *P. Ross. Georg.* V 30 = *SB* IV 7433 (449/50 or 464/5).

[10] On the military in this period, see, in general, Michael Whitby, 'Armies and Society in the Later Roman World', in *CAH* XIV (2000): 469–95, and Zuckerman 2004.

by which measure he strengthened local military command at the expense of the central military authority.

Late antique administration was more flexible than its reputation suggests. A *constitutio* from 435 (*Cod. Theod.* 6.28.8) and some papyri indicate that the authority of the *comes Aegypti* was not limited strictly to the military field.[11] Apparently he also carried out some civilian duties, since the *Augustalis* was completely occupied in dealing with matters at the diocese level. Finally, from around 470 we see examples of the combination of the two offices with the title *dux Aegypti* (or *Aegyptiaci limitis*) *et praefectus Augustalis*, which marked a departure from Diocletian's principle of the separation of powers.[12]

Justinian continued this trend further in his *Edict* 13 of 539, in which he fundamentally reformed the Egyptian diocese.[13] Despite the fragmentary state of preservation of the edict – the chapters concerning Arcadia and Pentapolis have been lost and the one concerning Augustamnica is defective – it is clear: the objective of this reorganization was to strengthen those officials representing the central, imperial power. Civilian and military authority in the provinces of Aegyptus, Augustamnica, and Thebais, which had been subdivided before the edict, was once again held in a single hand. Aegyptus I and II, as well as Thebais superior (in the south) and inferior (in the north), and presumably also Augustamnica I and II were governed respectively by a *dux et Augustalis*, to whom a civilian *praeses* was subordinated. This meant that Egypt was treated in the same way as the other provinces, where the main role of the government was the preservation of internal security. In those provinces against which there was an external threat, civilian and military powers continued to be separate; an overall authority for the whole of the diocese similar to the earlier *praefectus Augustalis* no longer existed.

Justinian's reform, however, was not looking for a rigid plan but, rather, tailor-made solutions. Arcadia remained under a civil *praeses*, subordinated – at least temporarily – to the *dux et Augustalis Thebaidis*, and seems to have first received its own *dux et Augustalis Arcadiae* only after the Sassanid interlude of 619–29.[14] The unification of civilian and

[11] This is emphasized by Carrié 1998: 109–10.

[12] Fl. Alexander *comes limitis Aegypti et praefectus Augustalis* in *c.* 468/9 (*PLRE* II, s.v. Alexander 23); Fl. Arsenius *praefectus Augustalis et dux Aegyptiaci limitis* in *c.* 487 (*PLRE* II, s.v. Arsenius 2). An early example could have been Fl. Florus (*PLRE* II, s.v. Florus 2), who, according to Priscus, frag. 22 (= Evagr., *Hist. eccl.* 2.5), was as 'commander of all armed forces and also deputy head of the civilian administration' victorious over the Blemmyes and Nobades in about 453.

[13] On Justinian, *Ed.* 13, see, most recently, Demicheli 2000.

[14] Contrary to earlier views (e.g., M. Gelzer), there was only one civilian *praeses* in Arcadia also after *Ed.* 13 of 539, cf. Keenan 1977. A Fl. Theodosius, *dux et Augustalis Arcadiae*, is now attested in *P.Prag.* I 64 (Arsinoe, 636); on this individual, see Carrié 1998: 117–18 n. 94.

military powers took place only after the Byzantine reconquest and was probably a reaction to the Sassanid invasion. This is one of the rare cases in which a concrete historical event can be identified as the reason for an administrative reform.

GOVERNMENT

For the population of the empire the most important manifestations of the imperial government were the governors of the province. Their authority was evident above all in two activities: justice and taxation. Public court proceedings were occasions on which a governor appeared in front of all as the representative of the state's power. With the decline of the curial administration an ever-increasing number of legal proceedings shifted from the city courts to the court of the governor. Formerly, under the Severan emperors, the *praefectus Aegypti* could deal with the majority of the 1804 petitions which were to be processed in three days of a *conventus* (*P.Yale* I 61) by delegating most of them to his subordinates;[15] from the fourth century onwards such a possibility barely existed. The flood of lawsuits and petitions made to the governor increased to the extent that in the sixth century the cases with a value of up to 300 solidi, many of them clearly of more than trifling value, were referred to the *defensor civitatis*.[16] The imperial administration was therefore present above all in those cities in which the governors had their seats, Pelusium, Oxyrhynchos, Antinoopolis, and particularly Alexandria, where, as before, the threads of all the administrative authorities were drawn together. However, this was not exclusively the case: already during the Principate the prefects travelled on their yearly *conventus* to meet the provincials. In the fifth and sixth centuries the *praeses Arcadiae*, for example, resided not merely in the capital, Oxyrhynchos, but also from time to time in a secondary residence in Herakleopolis.[17] In addition, there was the institution of the travelling official, who journeyed to the villages to solve pending administrative problems on the spot.[18]

As far as the raising of taxes is concerned, the perception may have been different. Although it was clear to all that it was the emperor who demanded

[15] Horstkotte 1996. On the Egyptian *conventus* in general, see Haensch 1997.

[16] Justinian, *Nov.* 15 (535). On the *defensor civitatis* (*ekdikos*) and his changing duties, see Mannino 1984 and Frakes 2001.

[17] Attention has been drawn to these phenomena by J. R. Rea in the introduction to *P.Oxy.* LIX 3986 (494) (with further sources). Lodgings of the *praeses*, like the earlier *palatia* and *praetoria*, existed in all major cities of Egypt, cf. Lukaszewicz 1986: 177–8.

[18] Travelling *officiales*: *SB* XX 14515 (Thebais, first half of fourth century); *P.Abinn.* 26 (Arsinoite, about 346); *CPR* XXIV 1 (Herakleopolite, 355); *P.Lips.* I 45–55 (Thebais, 371–5); *P.Ant.* I 33 (Antinoopolis, 465).

taxes, the tax collectors in the villages of the *chôra* were liturgists from the same area, so taxation had a very local character. Representatives of the state appear rarely, and much more in the urban centres than in the periphery.

Although in the fourth century few Egyptians rose to the office of governor, by the sixth century at the latest more and more governors were drawn from the provincial elite. Very few members of this elite, however, succeeded in rising beyond the governorship to the aristocracy and to high imperial offices, although there are some prominent examples.[19] In accordance with the concept of limited government and its restricted scope of duties, the governors, as before, were amateurs who attained this *dignitas* due to their high social status. This, just like the open practice of patronage in bestowing offices (*suffragium*), should not be misunderstood as corruption but should rather be seen as an expression of the ancient (and medieval) concept of the state, which understood state offices as private benefice.[20] Governors brought only limited professional skills to their wide-ranging tasks in the fields of the administration of justice, tax collection, and supervising the local liturgical officials. For these purposes, a professional staff was at the governors' disposal, an arrangement which ensured continuity and experience in the administrative work.

The *officiales* were the interface with the ordinary public.[21] The titles and hierarchy of these *officiales*, who were part of the *militia* and were organized in a paramilitary way, were divided into a financial and a judicial branch.[22] The composition of such *officia* is known in outline from the *Notitia Dignitatum*. We are particularly fortunate: in *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 23 the office of the *praefectus Augustalis* and in *Or.* 44 the office of the *praeses Thebaidis* are mentioned as examples. But the information provided by the *Notitia* is selective, since the large number of staff specializing in scribal duties (the *ministeria litterata*) and the subordinate officials (*ministeria illitterata*), who were graded in numerous different ranks and who were organized in individual *scholae*, do not appear at all.[23] For many *officiales* of various ranks

[19] E.g., Fl. Eutolmius Tatianus (*PLRE* I, s.v. Tatianus 5), *praef. praet. Or.* 388–92, cos. 391; Fl. Cyrus from Panopolis (*PLRE* II, s.v. Cyrus 7), poet and protégé of the empress Eudocia, *praef. urb. Const.* 426, *praef. urb. Const.* II and *praef. praet. Or.* 439–41, cos. 441; Fl. Apion (*PLRE* II, s.v. Apion 2), *agens vice praefecturae praetorianae* (*Orientis*) 503–4, *praef. praet.* (*Orientis*?) 518; Fl. Strategius (*PLRE* II, s.v. Strategius 9), *comes sacrarum largitionum* 535–*c.* 538; Fl. Apion (*PLRE* IIIA, s.v. Apion 3), cos. 539.

[20] Collot 1965; Liebs 1978; Schuller 1980.

[21] This is stressed by MacMullen 1964.

[22] On the organization of the *officia*, cf. Palme 1999: 103–8.

[23] In the *Not. Dign.* all offices are listed according to their ranks, but their division into a judicial and a fiscal section is ignored. Further, the *Notitia* fails to mention the *exceptores* (scribes of the judicial section) and the *scriniarii* (bookkeepers of the fiscal section); rather, it is content with making a summary reference to the *ceteri cohortalini*.

their titles are better known than their actual functions. From the wealth of papyrological evidence it is becoming gradually clear that the offices of the provincial governors were quite closely modelled in terms of structure on the offices of the praetorian prefects, with which we are more familiar from John Lydus and Cassiodorus.[24]

In terms of the sizes of the offices, there were considerable differences: up to 2,000 *officiales* worked in the office of the *praefectus praetorio per Orientem*, whereas the office of a simple *praeses* would hardly have contained more than sixty to eighty administrators. Justinian apparently made an attempt to reduce the number of bureaucrats. The office of the *dux et praefectus Augustalis*, which was formed from combining a military and civilian office, contained, according to *Edict* 13, 600 officials. If these figures are extrapolated, then for the whole of Egypt we arrive at hardly more than approximately 2,000 *officiales* for the offices of all governors in total. In a population estimated at 4.75 million, there was one *officialis* for around 2,400 inhabitants.[25] These *officiales* are over-represented in the papyrological evidence. This is a sign of their above-average prosperity, since most of the attestations are found in private legal documents, which shed light on the economic and social position of the *officiales* rather than on their official, administrative activities and the intensity of the imperial presence.

Officiales received regular pay, as did soldiers. Until after the time of Justinian the remuneration was calculated in *annonae* and *capitus*, although payments in kind were converted into monetary terms (*adaeratio*). Concrete figures are provided for Egypt by the detailed list in *Edict* 13, which is structured according to rank and provides for a total of a mere 1,000 solidi per year for the 600 *officiales* of the *Augustalis*.[26] The pay of the *officiales* at the governor's office (the so-called *cohortales* or *cohortalini*) was rather miserable but is known to have represented only their basic income. They earned significantly more from the *sportulae*, which the provincials had to

[24] John Lydus, *De magistratibus* 3.4–7 (office of the *praefectus praetorio per Orientem*); Cassiodorus, *Variae* 11.17–32 (office of the *praefectus praetorio per Italiam*). Cf. the extensive discussion by Stein 1922 and Morosi 1977.

[25] This estimate of the size of the population follows Bagnall and Frier 1994: 53–6 for the Principate; in late antiquity similar conditions probably obtained. The permanently low number of officials in comparison with the size of the population in Egypt is emphasized by Bagnall 1993: 66, as well as by MacMullen 1964: 305–16, esp. 307 and 311, and Noethlichs 1981: 159 for the whole of the Roman empire.

[26] In comparison, according to *Cod. Just.* 1.27.1.40 (534), the 396 *praefectiani Africae* cost 4,172 solidi in total. Although this concerns the more senior *praefectiani* rather than the *cohortales*, this evidence is instructive also for Egypt: three quarters of the *officiales* are classified as simple *equites* and the opportunities for the *promoti* for financial advancement were also modest. Cf. the table on the praetorian prefecture in Stein 1922: 75, and also Jones 1964: II.590–1.

pay for each administrative service. From the middle of the fourth century at the latest, the *sportulae* were no longer tips but rather a kind of regular fee.[27] The *cohortales*, together with the *curiales*, formed the lowest stratum of the *honestiores*, and the former enjoyed the not inconsiderable advantage of being exempt from the costly and labour-extensive *munera*. Government regulations from the fifth century onwards might make us believe that service in the *provincialia officia*, which could last twenty years or more, was hardly attractive.[28] The papyri, however, give a different impression.

Nevertheless, the income of the simple *officiales*, namely the *ministeria illitterata*, was modest. Official tax registers from the fourth century (*P.Herm.Landl.*), as well as from the seventh (*P.Sorb.* II 69), show that the *officiales* and the military were not predominant among the landowners. They were well-to-do but in no way rich or powerful. An often cited example of the economic status of the *officiales* is the will of the *cursor* Pousi from the sixth century, who, apart from his house, had only household furniture and clothing to bequeath.[29] For the *ministeria litterata*, who could pocket *sportulae* more easily, the situation looked better. A small dossier dating to the end of the fourth century shows Flavius Isidoros, *beneficiarius* in the office of the governor of the Thebaid, as a well-to-do landowner.[30] Flavius Dioskoros, the well-known notary and poet from around the mid-sixth century, travelled widely and was probably educated in Alexandria. He cooperated with the duke's staff as a lawyer (*nomikos*) and spent two years in Constantinople (551–3). His father had also been a village headman (*protokometes*) and landowner.[31] Flavius Theodoros, *exceptor* in the *officium* of the *dux et Augustalis Thebaidis*, can be mentioned as an example of a wealthy *officialis*. In his will dating from 567 he left various properties, endowments to *piae causae*, and legacies of significant sums: Theodoros' wet-nurse and her daughter received a yearly pension of twelve solidi from the monastic heirs; even each freed slave received six solidi.[32] Flavius Theodoros was the son of a *scholasticus* of the *forum Thebaidis*, who therefore had also been in

[27] Stein 1922: 19–21; Palme 1999: 113–14.

[28] According to the *Not. Dign.* and some *constitutiones*, lower ranks of bureaucrats (*exceptores* etc.) were only allowed to rise to a higher *militia* through the emperor's favour (*clementia principalis*): *Or.* 43.13; 44.14; *Oc.* 43.13; 44.14 and 45.14, always with the expression: *exceptores et reliquos cohortalinos, quibus non licet ad aliam transire militiam sine annotatione clementiae principalis.* Cf. the regulations in *Cod. Theod.* 8.4.21–5 (410–12) and 28–30 (423–36).

[29] *P.Oxy.* XVI 1901 (sixth century), with the commentary of Keenan 2000: 617–18.

[30] On Fl. Isidoros, see Jones 1964: 11.595–6; on his business activities, see Keenan 1994: 445–6 with the sources; most recently, Zuckerman 1998a: 86–91.

[31] MacCoull 1988: 8–15; Kuehn 1995: 52–76, esp. 69 n. 148.

[32] *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67312 (Antinoopolis, 567); *PLRE* IIIB, s.v. Fl. Theodoros 27. On his property and family, see Keenan 2000: 618, 624–5.

the service of the *dux et Augustalis* of the Thebaid. The brother of Theodoros also seems to have served there. Here (and elsewhere) one comes across the well-known phenomenon of the sons of *officiales* and soldiers following their fathers into the *militia*, which accords with the legal rules concerning a quasi-hereditary obligation on the military class.[33] The result of this development was the formation of a distinct group in the population, from which the majority of the local civil servants were drawn and which divided up the offices among itself based on a network of personal contacts. A close intertwining of state power and personal interests was thus unavoidable.

The establishment of such more or less professional bureaucrat and soldier families had already begun in the fourth century. The best example is supplied by the so-called Taurinos archive originating from fifth- and early sixth-century Hermopolis, which documents the social rise of such a family over four generations.[34] Flavius Taurinos I (*c.* 405–55), son of a Plousammon and therefore probably of native Egyptian origin, served in the unit of the *Mauri scutarii* and rose from the rank of simple soldier to *primicerius* (second-in-command). His son, Flavius Ioannes I (*c.* 435–500), having first entered military service in the unit of the *Mauri*, soon moved to the *officium militare* of the Thebaid, where he worked for a long time as *scriniarius*. Shortly before his *missio* he was transferred back to active military service and retired, like his father, at the rank of *primicerius*. His son, Flavius Taurinos II (*c.* 465–512/3), made his career as *commentariensis* and *scriniarius* exclusively in the *officium militare* of the Thebaid before he left around 497, entered the church and was ordained as a priest in 510 at the latest. His son, called – as expected – Flavius Ioannes (II), was probably active in the civilian administration. Further examples of '*militia* families', such as the brothers Flavius Silvanus and Flavius Sarapion (*P.Lond.* III 992) from the early sixth century, could be mentioned.[35]

Members of the curial class and the provincial elite in general attempted to escape the increasingly onerous burdens and responsibilities imposed on them by the *boulê* (city council) by entering imperial service. Normally, they entered the local *officia*, and exceptionally they even managed to rise to much higher offices and ranks. Consequently, although the prosperity

[33] From the fourth century onwards the importance of the classes of soldiers and officials was often emphasized in the legislation, esp. in *Cod. Theod.* 7.22.2 (331). Papyri attest it until as late as the end of the sixth century: *P.Lond.* V 1714 (Antinoopolis, 570); *BGU* I 306 (Arsinoe, 566); *SB* VI 9592 (Arsinoe, 581); see Keenan 1975.

[34] H. Maehler, *BGU* XII, p. xix–xxvi with family tree; for an update, see G. Poethke, *BGU* XVII, p. xxxv; B. Palme, *CPR* XXIV 10 introduction. On the family's economic activities, see Keenan 1994: 446–9.

[35] The papyrological source material is cited by Keenan 1994: 449–51.

of the *officiales* was in many cases increased through service and salary, it was not necessarily acquired by these means. In the allocation of positions, professional competence played no decisive role, although a certain amount of literary–rhetorical education was desirable.[36] Specialized administrative or legal knowledge and experience in bookkeeping were acquired only through years of service. Tradition and routine were the factors which guaranteed a certain measure of professional expertise in the bureaucracy.[37]

A third of the *constitutiones* in the *Codex Theodosianus* and the post-Theodosian *Novels* (some 900 decrees between 313 and 468) are concerned with breaches of official duty. The narrative sources are full of complaints of extortion, coercion, perversion of justice, and excessive tax demands on the part of *officiales*. The papyri also occasionally report abuses of office, but these instances are limited. The topos of a pompous bureaucratic apparatus, which ruthlessly exploited the population, is no more or less true or false than for the preceding centuries.[38]

A certain measure of unpredictability was deliberately deployed as a means of reinforcing the emperor's authority. A lack of strictly defined remits for the various offices was successfully used to generate a certain amount of competition between them.[39] The enthusiastic judicial bureaucrat, Lydus, in his invectives against the financial section, gives the impression of distrust, which must have been rampant in many branches of the administration – but also of a certain *esprit de corps* within individual departments.

There was no lack of attempts by the imperial government to keep even governors in check due to potential abuses of office and to ensure their loyalty. To this end, the heads of the offices (*principes officii*) of the most powerful civil servants (in Egypt the *praefectus Augustalis* and the *comes Aegypti*) did not come from these departments themselves but rather

[36] Noethlichs 1981: 59–65. Nellen 1981: 117–47 (education of the bureaucrats in grammar, rhetoric, and history) and 345–73 on the increasing significance of the educated in the civil service.

[37] The most important work on this subject is Pedersen 1970: 182–205; cf. further Andreades 1926. Kelly 1994 sees the growing bureaucracy of late antiquity as an expression of the increasing level of literacy in this period.

[38] A high level of corruption is assumed by, e.g., Veyne 1981 and MacMullen 1988: 122–70. More balanced interpretations are Demougeot 1986, Schuller 1982. Of the 118 petitions which Fournet and Gascou 2004 collected, only three contained complaints against *officiales*: *P.Oxy.* VI 904 (second half of fifth century) against a *magistrianus*; *P.Hamb.* III 230 (Antinoopolis, about 550) against a *singularis*; *P.Lond.* V 1676 (Antinoopolis, 566–73) against a *scriniarius*, but concerning private matters. More numerous are, however, the complaints against the local pagarchs.

[39] On overlapping areas of competence, see C. M. Kelly, 'Emperors, Government and Bureaucracy', in *CAH* XIII (2nd edn., 1997): 169–75.

were appointed by the emperor from among the *agentes in rebus*.[40] These state commissioners, who were organized militarily in a *schola* and who are often misunderstood by researchers as a kind of secret police – their activity was neither policing nor secret – reported directly to the *magister officiorum* in Constantinople. In this way the government ensured a second, independent, stream of reports and indirectly controlled the administration of offices. Despite the limited number of the *agentes* – in the whole of the Byzantine empire there were approximately 1,200 in the fifth century – they appear in the papyri relatively often. The only *agens* who is more than a mere name to us is a certain Flavius Sarapodoros, often attested as a landowner in the Hermopolite in the fifth century.[41]

The frequent occurrence of *agentes in rebus* in the papyri is a further clear demonstration of the government's efforts to secure for itself information and communication. Furthermore, the office journals of the postal station Takona near Oxyrhynchos show impressively the high frequency of travelling *officiales* and soldiers – and the logistical performance of the state *cursus*, which maintained river boats and horse relays throughout the country.[42] The slowness of the flow of information, as well as the difficulty involved in transmitting and updating data, however, made prompt action or reaction by the bureaucracy very difficult.

ARMY

The distribution of troops and the underlying strategic thinking are on the whole clear from the *Notitia Dignitatum* and the documentary evidence, but it is difficult to be precise about individual details because of the disparate and scattered nature of our information.[43] Impressive fortifications, mainly built under the Tetrarchy, are spread throughout the country and still survive today in Babylon, Luxor, Philae, and in the oases. A snapshot of the troop-deployment in *c.* 400 is offered by the *Not. Dign.*, which lists no fewer than thirty-one *limitanei*-units under the control of the *comes*

[40] On the *agentes* in general, see Giardina 1977: 13–72; Clauss 1980: 23–40; Delmaire 1995: 97–118; esp. on the *principes officii*: Morosi 1979–80.

[41] The papyrological attestations of the *agentes* = *magistriani* have been collected by Sijpesteijn 1993: 165–7; additions in *CPR* XXIV, p. 129 n. 1. The economic situation of an *agens* is studied in Palme 1994.

[42] Accounts of the *mansio* in Takona: *P.Oxy.* LX 4087 and 4088 (mid-fourth century); a permit (*evectio*) for four soldiers: *Ch.L.A.* XLV 1320 (Thebais?, 399?). The papyrological sources on the postal service are analysed by Kolb 2000: 152–226.

[43] The last summary of the subject was Maspero 1912.

rei militaris per Aegyptum.[44] The *dux Thebaidis* had as many as forty-four units under his command.[45] Even though these units were smaller than under the Principate, the number of soldiers was not insignificant. Even a conservative estimate gives a figure of about 22,000 soldiers, significantly higher than in the second and third centuries.[46] Apart from these *limitanei*, there were also *comitatenses* in Egypt, under the command of the *magister militum per Orientem* (*Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 7) or one of the two *magistri militum praesentales* (*Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 5 and 6). Since these units, at least originally, had no permanent posts, their garrisons are not recorded in the *Not. Dign.* and, therefore, we do not know how many such elite units were stationed in Egypt. We only hear of such troops by rare chance: for example, for the fifth and sixth centuries, the *Vita* of the holy abbot Sabas written by Cyrillus of Scythopolis and a single papyrus mention the *auxilium palatinum* of the *Theodosiaci Isaurii* in Alexandria.[47] Some other units, such as the Herakleopolite *Leontoclibanarii*, which are attested more often, and the *Mauri* in Hermopolis, might – at least originally – have been *comitatenses*.

The two main tasks of the army were the protection of the country from foreign invasion and preserving internal law and order. Neither task was excessively difficult. Apart from the religious troubles already mentioned, there are hardly any reports of disturbances, but occasional rural unrest like that in the Delta in *c.* 600 is unlikely to have been unique. In the *chôra*, the military, as the nearest tangible representative of state authority, was always the first port of call for the civilian population. From the time of the Principate the officers of the local garrison (*centuriones, beneficiarii*) were called upon by the civilians as a police force and a quasi-judicial authority to dispense justice in everyday disputes. This practice did not cease in late antiquity.[48] But we cannot speak of a usurpation of justice by the military, either in a local context or with regard to the military courts of the *dux* or the *comes*. Whereas the papyri from the fourth to the seventh century have

[44] *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 28.13–46: four *legiones*, two *equites*, sixteen *alae*, and nine *cohortes*. Details of the deployment are discussed by Price 1976, Worp 1991.

[45] *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 31.22–67: two *cunei equitum*, seven *equites*, eight *legiones*, one *milites*, sixteen *alae* and ten *cohortes*. Cf. Worp 1994.

[46] All calculations are merely approximate: cf. Coello 1996: 33–42. Mitthof 2001: 1.217–31 calculates, on the basis of the papyrological sources, the total strength of the army in Egypt in the fourth century to be 22,000 soldiers and 15,000 horses and beasts of burden; this is a significant increase in comparison with the Severan period (15,000 soldiers and 6,500 horses and beasts of burden).

[47] Cyrillus Scythop., *Vita S. Sabae* 1 (ed. E. Schwartz, *Kyrillos von Skythopolis* (Leipzig 1939): p. 87, 6–16) and 9 (ibid.: p. 92, 24–93, 3) confirmed by *P.Paramone* 15 (Alexandria, 592/3). In *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 5.25 and 66 the *Theodosiaci Isaurii* appear as *auxilium palatinum* under the command of the *magister militum praesentalis I*.

[48] Aubert 1995. For the later period, see the papers of the officer Fl. Abinnaeus (*P.Abinn.*; Arsinoite, mid-fourth century), among which there are fourteen petitions addressed to him.

brought to light a good fifty bilingual reports of proceedings from civilian governors' courts, to date only three reports of court proceedings before a *dux Aegypti* are known.[49]

As far as potential enemies are concerned, there were the southern neighbours, the indigenous Nobades (a Nubian tribe), and the hard-to-control nomadic tribes of the desert, namely the Blemmyes (in the eastern desert).[50] Although the southern border of Egypt (and thus of the empire) had been drawn back to Philae and secured by garrisons since as early as Diocletian (298), there were occasional plundering raids along the Nile Valley, especially in the fifth century, which were avenged by Roman expeditions.[51] In around 425–30, bishop Appion of Syene petitioned no less than the emperor himself for help because Blemmyes and Nobades were plundering the cities near the first cataract.[52] Towards the middle of the century there was a major revolt by the Blemmyes, which was put down by the Romans. A peace treaty of the emperor Marcianus established a new order in about 452.[53] These 'low-intensity conflicts' represented a constant, latent threat to the civilian population but never a serious danger for the Egyptian province(s).[54] Nevertheless, in 535–7 Justinian's general Narses campaigned against the *barbaroi* and closed the Isis temple in Philae.[55] In *c.* 533 an imperial decree justified the stationing of the *Numidae Iustiniani* in Hermopolis in terms of the protection of the Thebaid and the 'repulse of every barbarian attack.'[56] Around 567 the situation seems to have escalated to a full-scale war, after which Flavius Athanasius, the *dux et Augustalis Thebaidis*, succeeded around 570 in restoring a lasting peace.[57]

Watchtowers, graffiti, and ostraca testify to a kind of centuries-old routine service which remained unchanged in the fourth to sixth centuries:

[49] *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4381 (Alexandria, 375); P.Acad. 56/1+2 + 57/1, ed. J. Gascou, *T&MByz* 14 (2002) 269–77 (Antinoopolis, mid-fifth century?); *Ch.L.A.* XLVII 1437 (Aphrodite, first half of sixth century). Cf. Palme 2006.

[50] Cf., e.g., Török 1988: 226–9; Dijkstra 2004: 149–54 with further literature.

[51] *FHN* III 314, 318, 328–9. The border was demarcated by Diocletian personally: Procopius, *Bell. Pers.* 1.19.29–35.

[52] *SB* XX 14606 = *W.Chr.* 6 = *FHN* III 314. The imperial rescript on the papyrus confirms that the request was granted. The Blemmyes took many prisoners, among them even the exiled ex-patriarch Nestorius.

[53] Priscus frgm. 21 = *FHN* III 318 with literature; cf. Jordanes, *Romana* 333 = *FHN* III 329.

[54] After Diocletian the threat posed by the nomadic tribes seems to have decreased in comparison with the third century: Demicheli 1976: 144–77. Cf. Rémondon 1955 and 1965b.

[55] Procopius, *Bell. Pers.* 1.19.36–7 = *FHN* III 328, perhaps exaggerated by imperial propaganda.

[56] Quoted in *P.Cair.Masp.* III 321.4–5 (Antinoopolis, 533/4); *P.Lond.* V 1663.5 (Aphrodite, 549) and *SB* V 8028 = *Ch.L.A.* X 464.4–5 (Aphrodite or Hermopolis, 550).

[57] Rémondon 1961: 72–9 even speaks of a 'Third Blemmyan War' inter alia on the basis of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67004, a petition of the *bouleutai* of Omboi addressed to Flavius Athanasius. In the light of a new study of this text by Dijkstra 2004, however, this interpretation seems forced.

the constant guarding of the transport roads and tracks through the desert regions, oases and valleys.[58] Since the time of the early empire, the trade routes from the Nile Valley to the oases of the western desert and through the eastern desert to the Red Sea ports had stood under the control of military patrols.[59] In order to relieve Roman troops of the burden of day-to-day defence, the Romans attempted to deploy the Nobades settled around the Kharga Oasis as a kind of buffer between themselves and the desert nomads. The settlement of a Blemmyan tribal community around Gebelein at the end of the sixth century may perhaps be seen in the similar context.[60] Large-scale settlement of *foederati*, however – so prominent in the provinces along the Danube – did not take place in Egypt. Soldiers with foreign names are attested mainly at the time of the Blemmyan wars around 563–8.[61]

Troop deployments and relocations are known only in outline, with limited help from the papyri. They confirm the evidence of the *Not. Dign.*: for example, the *ala V Praelectorum* – a unit well known around the mid-fourth century thanks to the papyri of its officer, Flavius Abinnaeus – was, according to *Or.* 28.34, still in Dionysias in the south-western corner of the Fayyum. Further, *Or.* 31.23 and 24 attest a *cuneus equitum Maurorum scutariorum* in Lykopolis and in Hermopolis, respectively. With more than forty explicit (and many more implicit) attestations in the papyri, the *Mauri* are in fact the best-documented military unit of late antiquity, the history of which can roughly be followed between 339 and 539.[62] The *vexillatio* (elite cavalry unit) of the *Mauri scutarii* was first based for a short time in Oxyrhynchos *c.* 339 before it was split up into two *cunei*, which were then stationed in Lykopolis and Hermopolis, respectively. Kysis in the Great Oasis also lay within their radius of action.[63] Papyri from the second half of the sixth century name three units in the region of the first cataract: a legion in Syene and a further one in Philae, as well as a *numerus* in Elephantine,

[58] The guarding of the desert routes and the related duties are vividly described by R. S. Bagnall, *O.Florida*, pp. 16–34. Although the group of Theban ostraca on which his study has been based comes from the second century, numerous similar texts in *O.Douch* I–V (Kysis, fourth–fifth century) justify the assumption that the circumstances were not substantially different 300 years later.

[59] Cuvigny et al. 2003: I.187–204; II.334–57. On the archaeological evidence, see the literature collected by Alston 1995: 193–201.

[60] Attested by an archive of thirteen texts from Gebelein, 40 km south of Thebes: *FHN* III 331–43; cf., most recently, F. Mitthof, *SPP* III² 219–38 introduction.

[61] E.g., Ricimer in G. Lefebvre 1907: no. 559; Vitalianus in *BIFAO* 73 (1973) 201–6; Bonifatius and Romulus in *CPR* XXIV 15. On this phenomenon, cf. Gascou 1975.

[62] On the *Mauri* of Hermopolis, see Keenan 1994: 444–5; Mitthof 1994: 260–2. For new evidence and literature, see *CPR* XXIV p. 23 n. 3.

[63] *Mauri* in Oxyrhynchos: *P.Oxy.* LX 4084 (339) and *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4628 (fourth century); in Lykopolis: *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4381 (375); *BGU* XII 2137 (426); P.Acad. 51, ed. J. Gascou, *Pap.Congr. XXII*: I.544–7 (535); in Kysis: *O.Douch* IV 457; *O.Oasis* 11.

which agrees with the information provided by the *Not. Dign.*[64] A few military units from the fifth and sixth centuries are attested several times, such as the *vexillatio* of the *Leontoclibanarii* in the Herakleopolitan village Aly and the infantry *numerus* of the *Transtigritani* of Arsinoiton Polis, while others are known from one or two mentions, like the *Daci* in the Fayyum or the *Pharanitai* at Bau (Pbow) monastery in Upper Egypt.[65] The *Not. Dign.* did not yet know these units around 400, whereas the *Transtigritani* occur in *Or.* 7.58 as *legio pseudocomitatensis* still under the command of the *magister militum Orientis*. The unit was transferred to Egypt between 400 and 406, the date of its first attestation in papyri (*SB* XIV 11574).

The military occupation of Egypt was, therefore, by no means static. Under Justinian, in particular, changes were evident in terms of old units disappearing and new (elite) ones appearing. In Hermopolis the *Mauri* were replaced by the *Numidai Iustiniani* only around 533; in Apollonopolis Magna the *Scythai Iustiniani*, and in Antaiopolis the *Bis electi Iustiniani*, are found. In Omboi a *vexillatio* was stationed.[66] The evidence throws only a few spotlights on a picture which remains mainly in darkness. The strategic concepts and background to these changes remain hidden from us.

Documents from the military offices themselves, which kept the Latin language until at least the beginning of the sixth century, are rare.[67] The sources are richer in respect to the raising, transporting, and delivery of the *annona militaris*. Receipts, payment orders, tax lists, etc. afford particularly detailed insights into the logistics and infrastructure of the army.[68] Taxes payable in kind, such as wheat, wine, meat, and oil, were an enduring part of the tax burden on the population. They were collected by the local administration and were stored and managed by the civilian tax authorities. It is an expression of the mutual check of state institutions on each other

[64] It is, however, uncertain whether the units mentioned colloquially in the papyri were in fact the same as the ones which were, according to the *Not. Dign.*, *Or.* 31.35, 37, and 64, stationed at the same places a good 150 years previously: the *milites Milarienses* in Syene, the *legio I Maximiana* in Philae, and the *cohors I Felix Theodosiana* at Elephantine. For the identification, see Jones 1964: 655 and 662; Keenan 1990: 141–2 is, however, more cautious.

[65] The *Transtigritani* occur in a good dozen papyri between 406 and 538, cf. *CPR* XXIV, pp. 87–97, Exkurs IV. The *Leontoclibanarii* left approximately twenty attestations in papyri between 487 and 546, see Palme 2004: 311–32. A *numerus* of *Daci* is only mentioned in *SPP* XX 139.2 (Arsinoe, 531); the *Pharanitai* – rightly identified as a military unit by Gascou 1976 – appear in *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67054.2 and 4 (Aphrodite, sixth century); *P.Flor.* III 297 (Aphrodite, 540/1?); *P.Lond.* V 1735 (Syene, sixth century); *SB* XIV 11854 (provenance unknown, fifth–sixth century) and *P.Oxy.* LXVIII 4700 (504).

[66] Gascou 1994: 326 n. 12.

[67] Some examples are: *CPR* XXIV 15 (Hermopolis, about 500), a military roster; *P.Münch.* 2 = *W.Chr.* 470 (Elephantine, 578), the enrolment of Patermouthis, son of Dios; documents concerning promotion and discharge: *Ch.L.A.* XLIII 1248 (provenance unknown, 401) with Rea 1984.

[68] Mitthof 2001: I.83–288.

that the army was not allowed to raise its *annona* itself but had to apply for it to the civilian tax authorities according to its need, calculated on the basis of its actual strength. Sporadically, one hears of complaints against unlawful 'requisitioning' by soldiers, but the opposite could also occur: soldiers complained bitterly that the population had for months delayed the provision of their rations, leading to increasing hunger among them.[69] Such texts do not give the impression that the local garrisons were seen as a burden which struck fear into the hearts of the local population.

The overwhelming majority of the 'military papyri' consists of private documents and shows the soldiers in provincial society, as lessors, lessees, and money-lenders. We cannot tell how many such transactions soldiers engaged in and whether they were occasional or long-term enterprises.[70] The already mentioned Taurinos Archive gives us a rare insight into the economic activities of a soldier family in Hermopolis over four generations between approximately 425 and 515.[71] The father, Taurinos I, seems to have laid the foundations of the family's fortune through an ambitious career in the military. His son, Ioannes I, appears to have quite consciously enlarged the family's wealth, which consisted of agricultural land, vineyards, farmsteads, and rent houses. The grandson, Taurinos II, could afford to retire early from his job as *commentariensis*. The growing number and size of business transactions demonstrate the rise of this family from humble beginnings to a very well-to-do, if not rich, level.

Towards the end of the sixth century the papyri from Syene which concern the soldier Patermouthis provide numerous glimpses into the business activities and social conditions of soldiers, of whom more than one hundred are attested by name.[72] Their names indicate that all three units were filled with local recruits. We hear a great deal about the economic activities of the soldiers, who apparently also had civilian occupations, mostly as boatmen. In contrast, we hear little about military activities and their service seems

[69] Complaints against soldiers: *P.Flor.* III 295 + *P.Lond.* V 1678 (Antinoopolis, 566–8): *Demotai* of Antaiopolis voicing their complaints in the *officium ducale* against the excesses of soldiers of the *numerus Antaiou*; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67009 (Antinoopolis, 567–70): inhabitants of Antaiopolis complain to the *dux* about Florentinus, soldier of the *Scythai* and *agens in rebus*. Soldiers' complaints: in *BGU* IV 1027 = *W.Chr.* 424 (Hermopolis, about 357) the *praeses Thebaidis* reproaches the *exactor* and council president for having failed to deliver the *annona* for the preceding three years (!), cf. Mitthof 2001: II.476–9 no. 142. In *BGU* III 836 = *W.Chr.* 471 (Arsinoe, 530–8) the *priores* of the *Transtigritani* complain to the *praeses Arcadiae* of the inhabitants of the village Kerke having refused to provide provisions and having driven away the soldiers (!) on the grounds that they had already paid the *buccellarii* of Strategios, a *patricius*, cf. Mitthof 2001: II.552–3 no. 189.

[70] Numerous good examples have been collected by Keenan 1994: 448 and 450–1.

[71] See n. 34 above; an excellent analysis of the economic activities of this family is Keenan 1994: 446–9 with the sources.

[72] A circumspect analysis is provided by Keenan 1990: 139–50.

to have been limited to policing and securing the border, escorting and transportation. The Syene papyri paint a picture which we commonly have of the *limitanei*: a local *militia*, which is deeply rooted in provincial society and in which there was little more than the old, impressive-sounding ranks, such as *ordinarius, draconarius*, and *campiductor* (or *campidoctor*), to remind one of the distant imperial power. These units may appear as underemployed and more concerned with their private affairs than military activities. But the periodic reports of the raids of the southern neighbours suggest that their military duties should not be underestimated.

Although the military was always a significant economic factor in the province,[73] no concentration of landownership in the hands of the (higher) officers in Egypt can be detected. An opportunity for a limited quantitative analysis is offered by the already mentioned land register from Hermopolis (*P.Herm.Landl.*) from the second quarter of the fourth century. If we look for soldiers among the landowners, it becomes clear that only 1.8 per cent of the land was in the possession of individuals bearing a military title.[74] A comparison with a tax register also from Hermopolis from the start of the seventh century (*P.Sorb.* II 69) allows us to conjecture that the ownership of land by the military diminished rather than grew.[75] On the other hand, the increased occurrence of soldiers as lessors of land and houses, or as creditors in loan contracts, could suggest that in the fifth and sixth centuries soldiers were better off than in the economically uncertain periods of the third and early fourth centuries.[76] Even on the basis of a conservative estimate, the proportion of Egyptian agricultural land owned by soldiers – approximately 1 per cent – probably corresponded to the proportion of soldiers in the population, which equated to hardly more than 0.5 to 0.8 per cent. No shift of property from the curial class to the military took place in Egypt.[77]

Was the army a burden on the population in other respects? The supplying and equipping of troops had, since Diocletian, been based on the entire agricultural production of the country in the form of the fixed taxes of the *annona militaris* and *vestis militaris*, rather than being a matter of random requisitioning. The billeting of foreign soldiers in private houses, which

[73] Carrié 1977: 373–93; 1995. [74] Bagnall 1992a: 47–54; 1993: 128–49.

[75] The *officiales* and the soldiers are well-, but by no means over-represented: see the analysis by J. Gascou, *P.Sorb.* II 69, pp. 61–2.

[76] Rémondon 1965b: 132–43 and Carrié 1976 see a considerable increase in their wealth towards the end of the fourth century.

[77] Assuming 4.75 million for the total size of the population (cf. n. 25 above). This corresponds to the average of 0.8 per cent, which should be assumed for the whole of the empire, see Carrié 1986: 470–6. For Egypt, Carrié 1977: 385 assumed lower figures on the basis of higher estimates of the total population size of Egypt at seven million.

was a heavy burden elsewhere in the empire, occurred at most only in isolated cases.[78] As in previous centuries, there are reports from the Byzantine period of threats or use of violence by individual soldiers.

There is no evidence that Egypt provided recruits who were deployed abroad, as it still did at least occasionally in the fourth century. Accordingly, the country only had to provide new recruits for the local army. Assuming twenty years of service, a regular army of around 22,000 men required around 1,430 recruits per year, while approximately 810 veterans were discharged per year.[79] Compared with the total size of the male population, this need was minimal and did not involve much loss from the labour force. From each nome a mere thirty recruits were required every year. Since Valens' reform in 376, the provision of recruits had been a duty of the *civitates*, that is, a responsibility for the *boulê*. Under the system of *adaeratio* it was, however, possible to make a cash payment instead. The provision of recruits had been a de facto tax since then.[80]

Some careers which can be followed in the sources show that, on the one hand, even simple soldiers could rise to the rank of commander and, on the other, promotion did not take place in equal, yearly steps for all. Patronage, ability, and luck could speed up one's career.[81] On the basis of the relatively low life expectancy alone, only approximately half of the soldiers survived until their *missio honesta*. The number of veterans returning to civilian society was therefore small. A unit of around 400 men demobilized about fourteen veterans per year after twenty years of service. Since longer periods of service were apparently also the order of the day, this reduced the number of veterans still further. For these reasons, no social pressure on the part of the soldiers and the veterans in Byzantine Egypt is detectable in the sources or is to be expected.

SEMI-PUBLIC POWER

There is a third point to consider: the fifth and sixth centuries witnessed the polarization of society, particularly of the local bouleutic class, into

[78] Complaints against soldiers billeted in private houses are the subject of the private letter *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4628 (fourth century) and the petition *P.Oxy.* L 3581 (fourth–fifth century), addressed to a *tribunus*.

[79] These calculations follow Scheidel 1996: 93–138, esp. 121–2 with tables 3.14 and 3.15. Divergent calculations are discussed ibid. n. 80.

[80] Zuckerman 1998a: 86–91. Carrié 2004.

[81] On the career of Taurinos I: Keenan 1994: 446–7; Ioannes I: *CPR* XXIV 10 introduction. The career of Patermouthis, son of Menas, is less clear: Keenan 1990: 142–4. The examples of Menodorus and Callinicus, both soldiers of the *Leontoclibanarii* in the first half of the fifth century, show that promotion did not take place in regular and equally paced steps, see Palme 2004: 322–3.

those becoming progressively impoverished and those becoming richer. Whereas until the beginning of the fifth century the *curiales* owned the lion's share of landed property, a new elite of landowners consolidated itself in the second third of that century. Emerging from the local bouleutic stratum, they rose above their social peers by attaining influential offices in the imperial administration and acquired higher social status and more economic power.[82] The papyri reveal the names of no more than a handful of prominent individuals who explicitly called themselves *geouchoi*. The best-known example is Flavius Strategios I (*c.* 440–*c.* 465), 'progenitor' of the Apion dynasty, who as *curialis* (*politeuomenos*) took over the management of the *domus divina* of the empress Aelia Eudocia in the Oxyrhynchite and was later promoted to the rank of *comes sacri consistorii*.[83] Many others, albeit not referred to as *geouchoi* in the sources, could also be candidates for such a list.

It was long thought that the consequence was an increasing usurpation of state power on the part of private landlords, which resulted in a gradual feudalization and a clear disappearance of imperial power in favour of the influence of local potentates, who even defied representatives of the imperial government.[84] This was seen in the context of an empire-wide development of patronage and colonate.[85] These supposed processes are much less clear in the papyri. Even the term *colonus adscripticius* can be detected in only one nome, the Oxyrhynchite,[86] where our picture is influenced decisively by a single archival find: the papers of the so-called Apion dynasty.[87] But the Apion family was an exceptional phenomenon (cf. chapters 11 above and 14 below).[88] In most areas, power at the local level was most obviously in the hands of the pagarchs, who around the mid-fifth century replaced the former nome officials, above all the *exactores* and the *praepositi pagi*, under circumstances not yet quite clear, and in the sixth century were responsible for at least the collection of taxes.[89] Towards the end of the sixth century and in the seventh they appear as the most powerful officials of the *chôra*, whose respective powers extended over a single nome.

[82] On this development, see e.g. Bagnall 1993: 68–78 and 214–19 for the situation in the fourth and early fifth centuries; for the later period, see Fikhman 1975, Banaji 1999 and 2000: 96.

[83] On the career of Strategios, see Delmaire 1988: 130 no. 51; Mazza 2001: 52–3, and, most recently, Gonis 2004: 176.

[84] Feudal structures are seen in Egypt by Bell 1917 (the most influential study arguing in favour of seeing feudal structures as early as the fifth and sixth centuries); Gelzer 1909; Hardy 1931. On the history of scholarship concerning this subject, see Keenan 1993: 137–41.

[85] Sirks 1993: 331–69. [86] Carrié 1984: III.939–48; Fikhman 1990: 159–79; 1991.

[87] Hardy 1931: 25–38; Gascou 1985: 61–75; Mazza 2001: 47–74.

[88] This is stressed by Jördens 1999.

[89] On the power of the pagarchs in Egypt, cf. Gascou 1972; Mazza 1995.

An inseparable intertwining of state power and the personal power of local potentates inevitably resulted when great landlords took over the office of the pagarch, as the already mentioned Apions – at least nominally – had done in the Oxyrhynchite and Arsinoite nomes for decades. The governmental roles of great landowners have become a stereotype for Egypt from the mid-sixth century into the early Arab period. In the papyri it is often hard to determine whether such landowners serving as pagarchs acted as state officials or as private individuals. It has even been claimed that private arbitration replaced the governor's law courts.[90] And yet the contrary can be seen in occasional instances of local potentates in conflict with representatives of the government. An instructive example is the situation described in *SB* XXIV 16222 (beginning of the seventh century), where even a landowner with the high rank of a *patricius*, Flavius Strategios 'paneuphemos', was subjected to the random seizure by a *scribo*, a high state commissioner, of ships of his grain-transporting fleet.

More recent research has successfully challenged the feudal model and has pointed out that the great households, the *oikoi*, did not usurp state power but were burdened with it by the state.[91] In many cases the landlords replaced the *curiales*. This is reflected by the composition of the *boulai*, in which the curial offices and titles were replaced in the course of the fifth century by a less clearly defined group of *proteuontes*, which now determined the fate of the *civitates*.[92] With the decrease in the municipal administration and the liturgical system, the imperial government relied increasingly on those landowners of the provincial patriciate and of the church whose estates and influence grew. They did not work against the government, but rather with its approval and sanction. The Byzantine state 'outsourced' a good part of its business to private hands and called upon those social strata which were economically in a position to perform these duties also as 'munera de longue durée'.[93] Nevertheless, the power of individuals, as opposed to that of the state, seems to have steadily grown in the late sixth century.

THE SEVENTH CENTURY

The crises of the seventh century revealed both strengths and weaknesses of the imperial government: in the civil war between the emperor Phocas

[90] Schiller 1971. Simon 1971 is, however, more cautious, and see the refutation by Beaucamp in chapter 13 below.
[91] Gascou 1985: 4–60; Carrié 1997; Banaji 2001: 134–70.
[92] On the decline of the municipal administration, see Liebeschuetz 1992; for the disappearance of the *curiales*, cf. Laniado 2002.
[93] Gascou 2004: 419.

and Heraclius (609–10), the usurper could for a long time prevail only in Alexandria,[94] but the army could not overcome the external threats posed by the Sassanids (619–29) and the Arabs (640/1).[95] One has the impression that the Sassanids conquered Egypt by surprise but afterwards made no attempt to replace the existing state structures. The only surviving dating formula in a papyrus document from the Sassanid intermezzo expresses the idea that Egypt was then under the rule of the Persians but was still considered to be under the administration (*dioikêsis*) of the Byzantine emperor as a vassal of the Persian Great King.[96] The change of power was not without consequences for the local ruling elite: the head of the Apion dynasty disappeared in the course of the Persian conquest and a collaborating pagarch, Flavius Menas, was removed after the Byzantine reconquest.[97]

The short phase of the Byzantine restoration between 629 and 641 remains obscure in institutional terms. Arcadia was established as a separate ducate[98] and apparently quite exceptional powers over Lower Egypt, in both the fiscal and the administrative areas, lay in the hands of Cyrus, the archbishop of Alexandria. His relationship with the traditional administrative apparatus remains a mystery.[99] For the Arab conquest and the administrative consequences in the early Islamic period, see chapter 21 below.

Despite all its weaknesses, the early Byzantine provincial administration was efficient in as much as it was able to ensure the administration of justice and to raise sufficient taxes to support Constantinople and the army. It is proof of the efficiency of this administration that, despite all the political and military disturbances, it outlived even the Byzantine retreat from Egypt and was adopted, without fundamental changes,[100] by the Arabs over the next three or four generations.

[94] *CPR* XXIV 27 shows that Middle Egypt was still under the control of Phocas in January 610. This confirms the description of events given by John of Nikiou, *Chron.* 107.46–9 (English translation of the Ethiopic text in Charles 1916: 172).
[95] Butler 1978: 69–92 on the Sassanid conquest; 194–367 on the Arab conquest. Schmitt 2001: 211–16.
[96] *P.Paramone* 18 (Hermopolis, Aug.–Sept. 620). On the Persian rule, see Altheim-Stiehl 1992.
[97] Fl. Apion III died between 5 July 619 (*P.Iand.* III 49) and 12 January 620 (*P.Oxy.* LVIII 3959); his son, Fl. Strategios III, is never mentioned after that date either. Fl. Menas was pagarch already under Byzantine rule in 617 (*SPP* III 303). He was still in office under the Persians in 622 (*CPR* XIX 32 and XXIV 30) but not after the Byzantine *reconquista*, cf. *CPR* XXIV pp. 178–81.
[98] Keenan 1977: 201 with n. 26; *CPR* XXIV, pp. 202–4.
[99] Schmitt 2001: 213.
[100] A reorganization took place between 655 and 669. In *CPR* XIV 32 (Arsinoe, 655) Ioannes still appears as *dux Arcadiae*. In *P.Mert.* II 100 (Arsinoe, 669) and *P.Apoll.* 9 (provenance unknown, 675/6), however, a Iordanes *dux Arcadiae et Thebaidis* occurs. The Arabs, therefore, merged Middle and Upper Egypt into one administrative unit or, more precisely, tax assessment area.

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CHAPTER 13

Byzantine Egypt and imperial law

Joëlle Beaucamp

When in 212 Roman citizenship was granted to almost the whole free population of the empire, the inhabitants of Egypt, like those of the other provinces, became Roman. Yet, in all likelihood, the new citizens did not suddenly start living in accordance with every rule of Roman law. Thanks to the abundance of documentary papyri, social practices in Egypt are better known than elsewhere in the empire and since the end of the nineteenth century scholars have constantly compared them with Roman norms.[1] A central issue in scholarly discussion of the documents has been the degree to which Justinian's legislation, his compilations as well as his *Novels*, was known and applied in Byzantine Egypt during the sixth and seventh centuries.[2]

REFERENCES TO IMPERIAL LAW IN PAPYRI

The view that Justinian's law was enforced in Byzantine Egypt prevailed for quite a long time, reaching its climax with Taubenschlag's various studies published between 1930 and 1955.[3] Some reservations were then expressed,[4] and later a drastic reassessment took place, when Schiller maintained[5] that 'contemporaneous legislation emanating from Constantinople had no impact on the current law in Egypt', and that 'the codification of Justinian was practically unknown and almost totally disregarded in practice'; besides, civil courts, in his view, disappeared from the Egyptian provinces. This situation, he argued, was linked to the Egyptian population's hostility towards imperial power, as a result of the latter's pro-Chalcedonian policy after 518. Schiller's radical thesis met with some serious, but limited,

[1] Mitteis 1891.
[2] For a history of the discussion, cf. Schiller 1970: 41–5; Amelotti and Migliardi Zingale 1985: 5–9.
[3] Taubenschlag 1930: 420–34; 1940–1: 280–95; 1948: 67–73; 1955.
[4] Steinwenter 1952: 131–7; 1958: 1–34, 569. [5] Schiller 1970: 41–60; 1971: 469–502.

criticism.[6] Since 1970, the papyrological evidence has significantly increased, and a new study of the documents is warranted. It will lead us to rather different conclusions.

First, the Greek term *nomos*, 'law', which appears very frequently (in both the singular and the plural) in papyri of the sixth and seventh centuries, sometimes denotes a precise imperial enactment. Taubenschlag once stated that *nomos* could be used for Justinian's codification as a whole; for the *Code*; for constitutions inside or outside the *Code*; or even for *Novels*. Schiller rightly observed what such a perspective implies (in each instance *nomos* would refer to a specific legal rule whose origin the notary was aware of) and reached quite different conclusions: *nomos*, in his view, nearly always had the meaning of law or legal order, and not that of statute, constitution, or enactment. It is this view that needs re-examination.

Well-known mid-sixth century papyri, found at Aphrodite among the 'papers' of the famous notary and poet Dioskoros (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024–9), are significant in this respect. Written as if they were imperial rescripts, they mention *nomos* or *nomoi* about twelve times. Schiller considered them rescripts of Justinian (or copies thereof); as a result, their references to *nomos* do not in his analysis concern Egypt. In reality, however, according to the interpretation now prevailing, they represent drafts that petitioners submitted to the imperial chancellery in order to make the writing of the final rescript easier.[7] As a consequence, they are not at all irrelevant to Egypt. On at least one occasion, the term *nomos* indicates a precise imperial enactment. One papyrus (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67028) indeed refers to a law of the emperor Leo forbidding the second wife to receive more property than one child of the first marriage. At the end, a quotation of the law is introduced with these words: 'thus is the law of Leo'. The imperial chancellery would certainly not refer so bluntly to a monarch. The mention of Leo's law must therefore be ascribed to Dioskoros himself.

Most occurrences of *nomos* or *nomoi*, to be sure, do have the form of generic allusions to the prevailing legal order. Even these may nonetheless be meaningful, from two viewpoints. Is the legal order referred to in each case the imperial law or another set of norms? Are those references the product only of notarial traditions, or is some legal knowledge present, however basic? In other words, did the law known in Egypt become fossilized at the end of the fifth century, or can some experience of more recent law be assumed?

[6] Cf. Amelotti and Migliardi Zingale 1985: 7–8; concerning the existence of courts, Simon 1971: 623–57.
[7] Cf. Amelotti and Migliardi Zingale 1985: 44–5, 57–8; van Minnen 2003: 116–18; Zuckerman 2004: 82–3.

Many references to the law are to be found in stereotyped formulae, concerning for instance the validity of a will or the owners' rights.[8] These seem likely to be the product of notarial traditions. Yet formulae attested as far back as the fifth century are rare. Most of them appear only in the second half of the sixth century. This fact creates the impression that the existence of a legal order obtained greater recognition at that time, and Justinian's compilations could have played a part in that.[9] Caution remains necessary, however, since the significant growth in the evidence for this later period may introduce a bias in the data.

Mentions of the laws also occur frequently in petitions and other types of documents related to proceedings before the authorities.[10] These texts express general comments on the benefits provided by the laws. They claim as well that the defendant's behaviour scorns the laws. They finally ask the authorities to enforce the law bearing on the case submitted to them. These documents range from the mid-fifth to the mid-sixth centuries, and their statements could be considered mere *topoi*, traditionally conveyed by the genre of the petition. However, the term 'law' here indicates a higher order, and a public one: this order is connected with the authorities and sometimes explicitly with the emperor.

Other papyri confirm that the laws referred to are those of the empire. Thus, when two deeds written in order to disinherit children say that their father leaves them only 'the Falcidian [share] provided by the laws' (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67097; III 67353), the share reserved by imperial law for the legitimate heirs is meant.[11] Various provisions of Roman law about inheritance order, guardianship of minors, gifts, ranking of hypothecs, or long lease are also to be found.[12] The rule depriving a single testimony of any value and the law concerning murder and criminal procedure are mentioned too.[13] On the other hand, it is extremely rare that *nomos* refers to a legal order other than the imperial one. In his will (*P.Lond.* I 77), Abraham, bishop of Hermonthis, states that his funeral should be performed 'in accordance with the law of the country' (*epikhôrios nomos*). In *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353, a mention of 'the divine law' is seen by scholars as referring to the

[8] *P.Münch.* I 6.59–60 (583); *P.Mich.* XIII 660 (sixth century).
[9] Gagos and van Minnen 1994: 28–30 reached the same conclusion.
[10] For instance, *P.Oxy.* VI 902 (about 465), *P.Harr.* 135 (fifth century), *P.David* I 17 (504), *PSI* VI 686 (sixth century?), *SB* XVI 12371 (sixth century).
[11] This wider use of the term Falcidian (originally related to the sole issue of legacies) is frequent at that time and appears even in Justinian's *Novels*.
[12] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67026; *P.Budge*, ll. 135–8 (646), published by Schiller 1968: 79–118; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.234 (570); *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397.80 (545); *P.Lond.* II 483 (616).
[13] *P.Münch.* I 6.59–60; *P.Mich.* XIII 660–1.

Decalogue. In any event, there is no case in which *nomos* can be translated as 'custom'.

Secondly, explicit references to measures enacted by Justinian, including his *Novels*, are present in sixth- and seventh-century papyri, contrary to Schiller's assertions. In 570, Flavius Phoibammon, chief doctor of a hospital in Antinoopolis, had his will made in Dioskoros' office (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151). Phoibammon granted a monastery a vineyard for his salvation: the gift cannot be revoked and 'is of the *inter vivos* type in accordance with the law'. This point refers to a passage in the *Institutes* characterizing gifts between the living by their irrevocable nature. There is another hint at the *Institutes*. The will is described as 'civilo-praetorian' (*politikopraitôria*). This peculiar word refers to the title *De testamentis ordinandis* (*Inst.* 2.10.2–3), explaining that the requirements concerning witnesses derive from a conjunction between civil law and praetorian law. Obviously, Dioskoros was aware of its contents.

In a sixth- or seventh-century will (*P.Bodl.* I 47), the testator instituted an heiress and left a legacy to a hospital, making provision in case his heiress would be reluctant to fulfill this legacy: 'I want her to be deprived of the property given to her by me in this will, because the divine and new constitution authorizes it, since this divine and new constitution lets testators have the power not to keep for those who oppose their [will] the provisions from the law of the legacy.' 'Law of the legacy' should be understood as the *lex Falcidia*: dating back to the end of the Roman Republic, it secured to the instituted heir at least one quarter of the inheritance, by limiting the amount of the legacies to three quarters. The provisions deriving from the *lex Falcidia* form a chapter of the *Institutes* (2.22) and a title of the *Code* (6.50) as well as of the *Digest* (35.2). As for 'new constitution', the expression calls to mind a novel of Justinian. According to the prevailing opinion, *Novel* 1 of 535 would be meant: it deprives the heir of the Falcidian fourth if he has not fulfilled the legacies within one year. *Novel* 131 of 545 has also been considered: it specifically concerns legacies in favour of pious or charitable institutions. This uncertainty does not allow us to doubt, as Schiller did, the existence of any reference to a precise novel.

Thirdly, a notarial tradition going back to the end of the fifth century does not account for every mention of imperial enactments, contrary to Schiller's statements. This can be proved with respect to a formula featured in five wills. The formula describes the characteristics of the witnesses and explains how they played their part, specifying that the whole process is 'in line with the terms of the laws' (*kata tên tôn nomôn dunamin*). This

statement was considered an allusion to a constitution in Justinian's *Code* (*Cod. Just.* 6.23.21), deriving from *Novel* 16 of Theodosius II (439).[14] In Schiller's view, it is Theodosius' novel which was known in Egypt: the notarial tradition would have conveyed its requirements later; consequently, the sixth-century formulae would not prove any knowledge of Justinian's *Code*. A new look at the evidence leads to a different conclusion.

Three among the five wills come from Antinoopolis and could be ascribed to the same notarial tradition.[15] In the oldest one, written about 460, it is stated (*SPP* I: 6–7 no. 1): 'I established (this will) with my subscription and that of the seven legal witnesses, assembled at the same time and appending their seals in accordance with the divine constitution.' The wording is like that of Theodosius' novel, which, at that time, was the only possible source. The two others, related to Dioskoros, are later than Justinian's *Code* (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 and III 67312). Here the will is said to have been made 'in the presence of the seven legal witnesses, summoned and called [by the testator], [witnesses] who are Roman citizens over the age of puberty, with a claim to good reputation, who append their subscriptions during a single meeting and at one single moment, without any other action interfering, according to the terms of the laws'. In the two testaments related to Dioskoros, the formula is much more detailed than in the earlier one and translates word for word the Latin text of the constitution (which is identical in the two versions). Thus it is Dioskoros' legal expertise which is brought to light, rather than an unchangeable notarial tradition. In those days, such a knowledge would derive from Justinian's codification.

IMPACT OF IMPERIAL LAW IN EGYPT

Concerning the impact of imperial law on Byzantine society in Egypt, the prevailing opinion (in favour of such an impact) was again questioned by Schiller, claiming that Justinian's rules relating to private law were not effective. Since 1970, new editions of papyri have significantly added to the available evidence. Legal historians have investigated topics such as exheredation (*apokêryxis*, disinheritance), wills, marriage contributions, securities, and notarial practice.[16] Papyrologists and historians of late antiquity have considered other issues such as age of majority, paternal power, women's

[14] Taubenschlag 1930: 425; 1940–1: 285.

[15] The two others, later than Justinian's *Code*, come from Aphrodite (*P.Vat.Aphrod.* 7, *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67324).

[16] Wurm 1972; Amelotti 1969: 211–14; Amelotti 1984: 1161–72; Migliardi Zingale 1990: 109–12; Stolte 2002: 201–3; Stolte 2001: 35–43.

status, property transmission, arbitration, rescript procedure, and the learning of Latin and law.[17] These investigations are still too limited to permit a full synthesis of the relations between Byzantine Egypt and imperial law, but they allow, all the same, a set of general observations.

In the first place, imperial legislation makes a greater impact with regard to public, procedural, or formal issues than in the domain of the rules of private law. As regards public life, the incapacities or the exclusions imposed on women in Byzantine Egypt were in accordance with the legal ones: no woman fulfilled public functions (except in respect to her patrimony), appeared as witness in a contract or a will, or defended the interests of a third party before a court with the sole exception of her children.[18] Some measures of Anastasius and Justinian were also taken into account in a sixth-century handbook explaining how various city officials were appointed and resigned from their functions.[19]

Several rules of procedure were followed as well. In a fifth-century petition against the acts of violence committed by her husband (*P.Oxy.* L 3581), a certain Aurelia Attiena stated that she had sent to him 'a *repoudion* via *taboularios*, through the city *taboularios*, in accordance with imperial law'. The legal norms which were thus applied do not concern the grounds justifying a divorce but the divorce procedure, for which a Theodosian novel had decreed that a written statement should be officially sent.[20] In 498, a procedural document (*editio actionis*) concerning an inheritance lawsuit (*BGU* XII 2173) was aimed at notifying the defendant, as required by the law, of the civil actions that the plaintiff wanted to bring against him; moreover, it characterized these actions in the same manner as the legal treatise *De actionibus* did.[21] Later, in the sixth century, the record of a hearing dealing with a murder[22] shows that a state justice system kept on operating for criminal affairs. It also indicates that the rules concerning accusations were observed, as shown by the formula used by some plaintiffs to specify the nature of their accusation: 'I invoke . . . against him the law on murderers which applies to me'.

Concerning the making of deeds and their formal aspects, the impact of imperial law is even more striking. In addition to the stipulation clause, appearing from the third century on,[23] various requirements of imperial

[17] Arjava 1998: 147–65; Beaucamp 1992a; Beaucamp 1998a: 11–34; Beaucamp 2001: 1–13; Gagos and van Minnen 1994; Zuckerman 2004; Keenan 1978: 191–209.
[18] Beaucamp 1992a: 5–31. [19] Cf. Sirks et al. 1996: 101–6.
[20] Cf. Beaucamp 1992a: 97. [21] Cf. Sitzia 1973: 32, 36.
[22] *P.Mich.* XIII 660–1, with the additional fragment in *SB* XVI 12542: cf. Keenan 1995: 57–63.
[23] Cf. Simon 1969.

law were gradually introduced in the contracts: it was emphasized that the deed had been completed (*teleioô*) 'in accordance with the laws', with the subscriptions of the contractor and of the witnesses; it was also mentioned that the deed has been delivered (*apoluô*).[24] A Coptic record of a hearing presents interesting evidence in this respect. During the proceedings, which took place before arbitrators at Apollonopolis Magna (Edfu) in 646, a man called Philemon asserted that his opponent had no 'document (*khartês*) made in accordance with the law (*nomos*)'. He then explained more precisely what was required in order to achieve compliance with the law: a court would regard as deprived of any value a document (*khartês*) without subscription (*hypographê*), without witness (*martyros*), or without a *completio* (*kompleusis*) written by a *tabellio* (*nomikos*). Philemon, who could not write, described himself as a peasant not versed in such matters, in contrast to his opponent, depicted as a townsman (*politês*) and a deacon; he nevertheless states that he has learned these rules from 'those who know'. The norms regarding the establishment of contracts were thus relatively well known. The rules about the dating of documents imposed in 537 by a novel of Justinian were also taken into account.[25]

In addition, sixth-century wills make perfectly clear to what extent imperial law was applied in a different way, depending on whether rules on the form of documents or norms of private law were concerned. In 570, the will established for Flavius Phoibammon followed in minute detail the imperial regulations on witnesses[26] and took into consideration another requirement mentioned in the *Digest* and the *Code*: the instituted heir was permitted to take legal action by virtue of a codicil only if the testator had expressly said that his will was also valid as a codicil.[27] The testamentary provisions, on the other hand, do not testify to such a thorough harmony with the legislation. Admittedly, when Phoibammon institutes his children as heirs, fixes various legacies, and makes clear that his wife will only receive the bridal gift in addition to her own property, the provisions abide by Roman law, including its principle regarding separation of property between spouses. However, when Phoibammon appoints as guardian for his sons the superior of a monastery who will not be accountable to them, he appears to be at variance with Justinian's legislation. Likewise, when he gives to the monastery a vineyard, a fundamental distinction (between gifts made in contemplation of death and gifts between the living) set forth in the *Institutes* is not maintained.

[24] Migliardi Zingale 1994: 189. [25] Feissel 1993: 171–7; *CSBE* 45–7. [26] Cf. p. 275.
[27] Beaucamp 1998b: 70, 88–90; 2001: 3–5, 7–8.

As regards other fields of private law, similar reservations can be expressed. This holds for paternal power, which presented, in Roman law, a thoroughly specific form, if only because it lasted for life. The Roman concept of *patria potestas* remained relatively alien to Egypt. In 430, children in power inherited their maternal grandmother's property and sold it through their father (*PSI* XII 1239): here Roman requirements were more or less followed.[28] However, in 554, a woman gave her daughter for adoption, through a contract, and a married pair adopted the child (*P.Oxy.* XVI 1895): in this case the violation of Roman rules was complete.[29] Egyptian social norms also allowed a father to marry his daughter or make her divorce on the basis of his sole authority, in spite of the restrictive provisions enacted by imperial legislation. As for the widowed mother, she usually was in charge of her children and their property, and the limitations or prohibitions expressed in this respect by imperial law were not taken into account.[30]

Legislation concerning ethics and moral conduct did not have much influence either. Abduction, in Egypt as elsewhere in the empire, ended up in a marriage between the girl and her abductor, in spite of an absolute ban in imperial law. Concerning divorce due to misconduct, neither the grounds nor the punishments were those provided in constitutions of the fifth and sixth centuries. The delays imposed before remarrying after a divorce were no better observed. The clear disapproval shown by the legislation towards women's remarriage and the penalties expressed in that case had no more impact in Egypt; neither did regulations about to whose care the children were left after a divorce. Breaches in sexual ethics were punished by local officials with repressive means different from those provided by the legislation; finally, Justinian's reforms concerning women's imprisonment were apparently not applied.[31]

The influence of imperial law thus seems rather restricted as regards powers within the family as well as moral requirements. It appears more important in matters of property transmission. A specific feature of Roman law is that it gave to daughters, on intestacy, the same inheritance rights as to sons and did not exclude endowed daughters from their father's inheritance: they only had to return their dowry (*collatio dotis*). According to a Coptic document written about 570 and summing up an arbitration (*P.Lond.* V 1709),[32] a certain Ioannes had expressed his last will orally and stated that his whole property should be divided in equal shares between

[28] Arjava 1998: 160. [29] Beaucamp 1992a: 163–71.
[30] Cf. Beaucamp 1992a: 122–7, 143–6, 152–8, 172–90. [31] Cf. Beaucamp 1992a: 62–82, 160–2.
[32] Till 1954: 216–20, with a new translation.

his three children (one son and two daughters); yet one of the girls had received a dowry from him at the time of her marriage. Studying the other deeds of last will confirms that the dowry was not used to bar daughters from the inheritance to the benefit of sons and that there was no obvious difference in treatment either between sons and daughters or between male and female relatives. Analysing the concrete inheritance cases leads to corroborating observations: generally, male and female children inherited equally; married women, in most cases, took part in the inheritance with the other children (thus exclusion was not the social norm); in all likelihood, endowed daughters had to restore their dowry to take a share in the inheritance.[33]

Moreover, sixth-century legislation on marriage profits (*gamika kerdê*) was taken into account.[34] A sixth-century marriage contract (*CPR* I 30 II) provides that 'the possible survival profits will be distributed according to the provisions of the well- and piously established laws'. The term 'piously' usually refers to the imperial sphere: the legal order spoken of is the imperial one. Besides, the word used to denote the survival profits is *kasoi*, a Greek transcription of the Latin term *casus*. With the special significance of a profit resulting from the other spouse's death, *casus* is not seen before Justinian's constitutions. The impact of Justinian's personal legislation cannot therefore be denied.

Another sixth-century marriage contract (*SB* XVI 12230) rules on the 'gift made in contemplation of marriage' (*dôrea dia tous gamous*). Such a designation, intended to replace the older expression 'antenuptial gift', was introduced by a constitution of Justinian (531–3).[35] Moreover, the contract mentions that 'the equal value (of dowry and donation) has to be thoroughly preserved'. That statement refers to a rule expressed by *Novel* 97 (539), requiring that in future the marriage profits will be truly equal: not only do they have to represent the same proportion of the two marriage contributions, as before, but these contributions themselves need to be of the same value.[36] The measure is surprising and it has been doubted whether society could accept such a constraining requirement.[37] The contract from Egypt specifies that the dowry (in gold and in silver) has been paid in its entirety and that some amounts of gold and silver have been added to the

[33] Cf. Beaucamp 1998a.
[34] At marriage, each partner could contribute property to the other (the woman a dowry to her husband, the husband an antenuptial gift to his wife). The marriage contract governs the fate of these contributions. If there is no child and the woman dies first, the husband keeps part of the dowry; if it is the woman who survives, she keeps part of the gift. Property acquired in this manner is called 'marriage profits' or 'survival profits' in the juristic texts.
[35] *Cod. Just.* 5.3.20. [36] Cf. Migliardi Zingale 1990: 109–12. [37] Simon 1991: 188–90.

donation in order to reach the value of the dowry. In this case, not only was the imperial legislation referred to, but undoubtedly its provisions were implemented in a concrete manner. Justinian's strange measure had some effect in Egypt, at least once.[38]

Another marriage contract, ascribable to the beginning of Justin II's reign (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67006v), asserts that both parties have conformed 'to the divine constitution (*theia diataxis*) enacted about marriage contracts': the clauses that immediately follow detail what the 'marriage profits' consist in, depending on whether the husband or the wife dies first and on whether they have children or not. The suggestion has been made that the *diataxis* should be *Novel* 98 (539).[39] Another possibility is *Novel* 97, on equal marriage contributions, a measure which was known and applied in Egypt.

Roman law is also characterized by a strict property separation between husband and wife. Mentions of 'parents' estate' or 'parental estate' become significantly more numerous in papyri after 550, and that fact has been considered a sign that property community between spouses would have made some progress. This is not the case. In fact, even if the possessions were brought together during the marriage, they did not merge and they were divided like the spouses when a divorce took place.[40]

In the second place, the impact of imperial legislation varied according to social circles. A female guardian of her son, as provided by imperial law, appears in a settlement of 545 (*P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397): Leontia and the young consul Apion belonged to one of the most distinguished families in the empire, and the settlement was written by their staff. Contracts showing some knowledge of Justinian's novel about sureties were established by the same administrative services.[41] This is also true of contracts including a formula which was in line with imperial law and mentioned that the deed was concluded through a slave who 'acquires for his master action and obligation'.[42]

When a marriage contract applies the rules of *Novel* 97 on marriage contributions (*SB* XVI 12230), the two families involved are obviously very rich, considering the amounts of the dowry and of the husband's gift, and have the rank of 'most glorious' persons (*endoxotatoi*). A notification (*diamartyria*), made in Alexandria and dating from the reign of Justin II (*PSI* I 76), reveals a definite familiarity with Justinian's rules on the

[38] The requirement of equal marriage contributions was introduced by Justinian. The application of such a measure in Egypt is sufficient to disprove Schiller's thesis that sixth-century legislation had no impact there and the spread of Roman law was the result solely of notarial traditions.
[39] Amelotti and Migliardi Zingale 1985: 64. [40] Beaucamp 1992b: 61–76.
[41] Cf. pp. 282–3. [42] For instance, *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397.

antiphônêsis,[43] as presented in the *Novels*:[44] Christodote, who addressed the document to a banker, enjoyed the rank of *illustris*; she was the daughter of a patrician and the sister of a man described as 'most glorious'.

Justinian's legislation, including the *Novels*, was thus known to the elites of the empire or rather to the jurists whom they employed. However, this observation cannot be generalized to the whole of Byzantine society in Egypt. Among that population, other differences in the relationship to imperial law are to be seen. Deeds of last will are meaningful in that respect. Municipal elites had testaments established which prove knowledge of the rules enacted for the empire; humbler people resorted to hybrid forms of transmission.[45] The property situation of the surviving spouse is also enlightening. A notable of Antinoopolis, the chief doctor Phoibammon, specifies in his will that his widow will have her property back and in addition take possession of the bridal gift granted by him. Thus the two estates were dissociated as soon as one of the spouses died, in accordance with imperial law. On the other hand, in Syene in 583–4, the soldier and boatman Patermouthis and his wife Kako agree that the surviving spouse will have control of the whole property left behind by the other, on condition that he or she hand it down to the children in equal shares (*P.Lond.* V 1727).[46] More generally, when the married pair jointly exercised a craft or a trade, such a situation was incentive to keep the whole property in the hands of the surviving spouse.[47] Closeness to imperial law was therefore connected to social conditions.

In the third place, law became more markedly Roman in the sixth century. This generalization applies for instance to the legal categories concerning age. During the third and fourth centuries, there remained some hesitation, in particular about majority age.[48] Sixth-century papyri, on the other hand, clearly reproduced the Roman distinction between the age of puberty (at twelve years for girls or fourteen for boys) and that of majority (at twenty-five years): with the terms *anêbos* and *ephêbos* they referred to people before and after puberty, and with the expressions 'legal age of the twenty-five years', *aphêlikotês* or *teleios* ('adult') to the latter.[49] Similarly, in

[43] The Greek word *antiphônêsis* translates the Latin *constitutum*, denoting an informal agreement to pay a debt at an agreed time.
[44] Keenan 1978: 198–200, 209.
[45] Beaucamp 2001: 12–13. See also *P.Köln* III 157 (589), a document in which a monk gave freedom to a slave and which has the form of a contract.
[46] On the Patermouthis–Kako papyri (Elephantine, between 574 and 613), see Clackson 1995: 97–116 and the contributions of J. J. Farber and Clackson to Porten 1996.
[47] Beaucamp 1992b: 72–5. [48] Arjava 1999: 202–4; Beaucamp 1992a: 174.
[49] Cf. *P.Lond.* I 113 I.11–12, etc.; *P.Lond.* V 1708.11; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.46 and 211–12; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67312.17.

order to designate the child 'under his father's power', the fourth-century adjective (*hypokheirios*) was replaced in the sixth century by a new terminology (*hypexousios*, *hypexousiotês*), that of the Greek legal treatises and of Justinian's *Novels*.[50] This observation has a more general scope: the language of sixth-century documentary papyri offers striking similarities with that of the *Novels* or of contemporary legal works. Some examples were emphasized a long time ago, such as the expression 'every right, corporeal as well as incorporeal' or the sequence 'movable, immovable, or self-moving' or the substantive *eknikêsis* as an equivalent of the Latin *evictio*.[51] Other instances have been observed more recently. When, in Alexandria during the years 494–500, two borrowers jointly renew their loan, the contract's vocabulary is identical to that employed by Greek legal treatises when transposing the Latin technical terms of Roman law.[52] Other parallels concern the language of Justinian's *Novels*. The notification sent to a banker by Christodote shows clear familiarity with their phraseology.[53] The same conclusion applies to a settlement dating probably around 537 (*P.Vat.Aphrod.* 10).[54]

Some documentary texts thus have the same formulae, the same Greek equivalents for Latin technical terms, the same use of Latin words with Greek inflexions as the normative writings. In this respect, the crux is to know whether these formulae indicate a rather deep understanding of Roman law, and this issue, in turn, introduces the question of the teaching of Latin and of Roman law.[55] Recently, the capacities of Byzantine notaries in Egypt and their legal knowledge have been considered favourably.[56] In any case, it is clear that the best-known of all *tabelliones*, Dioskoros of Aphrodite, had such knowledge: he was aware of certain provisions of the *Institutes*, of various novels, and possessed at least a basic command of Latin.[57]

In the fourth place, the perspective of law enforcement is not sufficient to describe the complex relations between Egyptian society and sixth-century legislation. As a matter of fact, various scenarios are to be seen. First, law can be referred to and at the same time deprived of any effect. In 583, at Oxyrhynchos, Apion's heirs hired Serenus, a deacon, as tax collector: a man named Victor guarantees that Serenus will transfer to the landowners the

[50] Arjava 1998: 156, 160.
[51] Arangio-Ruiz 1920: 22 (repr. in *Studi epigrafici e papirologici*, Naples 1974); Wolff 1974: 79.
[52] *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4394. [53] Keenan 1978: 198–200, 209.
[54] Gagos and van Minnen 1994: *passim* (for instance, 100–4). See also *SB* XVIII 13274: MacCoull 1992: 383–4.
[55] See the contribution of Raffaella Cribiore in this volume, chapter 3 above.
[56] *P.Vat.Aphrod.* 10: cf. Gagos and van Minnen 1994: 28–30.
[57] Cf. van Minnen 2003; MacCoull 1988: 9–10, 35, 51, 53, 149.

whole amount collected, adding that he 'gives up the privilege of sureties, and especially the new constitution issued about sureties and *intercessores*' (*P. Oxy.* I 136). The constitution is *Novel* 4 of 535, which enacted what legal scholars call the 'benefit of discussion': from now on, a creditor was compelled to prosecute the main debtor first and was allowed to sue the sureties only if the main debtor was missing.[58] Besides, in many leases, both Greek and Coptic,[59] the tenant promised not to leave before the lease had expired, relinquishing the assistance of the laws. For instance, in a Greek lease written about 600, the tenant stated: 'I am not allowed to leave the tending of the vineyard before the completion of the two years: I indeed give up any assistance from the laws, allowing the tenant to leave after the first year, if he wants to.'[60] This time, the law is a statute dated between 484 and 530 and integrated in Justinian's *Code*. Actually, these clauses ran precisely against the purpose sought in the legislation.[61] However, they by no means prove that sixth-century legislation was mentioned only in order to be dismissed and was never considered a source of law in Egypt.[62] On the contrary, the imperial measures were known and were looked upon as belonging to the legal order. Yet powerful creditors or lessors, such as the Apions' family, could compel sureties or tenants to give up the measures meant to protect them, thus depriving the constitutions of any practical effect.[63]

Secondly, imperial law can at the same time be known and manipulated or diverted, as shown by the will of Flavius Theodoros (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67312). This clerk belonging to the office of the duke of Thebaid instituted two monasteries heirs of nearly all his possessions; to his grandmother, who, as such, was entitled to a fourth of his estate, he granted a property of little value and he forbade her to demand more on the account of the legitimate share. From the text analysis, it follows that its author was aware of the most recent provisions of Justinian's *Novels* concerning legitimate

[58] *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3952, a contract in which the Apion family hired a tax collector at Oxyrhynchos in 610, shows some knowledge of the very wording of the novel. After having said that the surety 'gives up the new constitution', it uses the expression 'according to the first rank'. It is a hint at the content of the novel, which stated three successive 'ranks' for prosecutions.
[59] There are seven Greek leases of that kind, among which at least four relate to vineyards; three other are Coptic. All come from Hermopolis, its vicinity, or from its closest neighbour, Antinoopolis. Most of them date from the second half of the sixth century or from the seventh.
[60] The law (*Cod. Just.* 4.65.34) was issued between 484 and 530.
[61] The same is true when, in a sale contract from the seventh century, two women declare that they give up the assistance granted to them by the law ruling on intercessions (*P.Herm.* 35).
[62] Against Schiller's opinion.
[63] *Novel* 136 (535) allowed relinquishing the protection granted to sureties, but only in the interest of bankers.

heirs and pious legacies, and that he made use of the possibilities offered by them or even diverted them from their genuine purpose in order to settle the inheritance along the lines suiting the testator.[64] *P.Oxy.* I 129 (sixth century) leads to similar observations. This document, in which a man notified his son-in-law that he put an end to the marriage between his daughter and the latter, makes allusions to serious offences committed by the son-in-law. This mention may refer to the legislation of the time, which required definite grounds to justify a unilateral divorce.[65] Yet the faults ascribed to the son-in-law are not explicitly stated, because, it is said, they appear unmentionable. That silence might in fact be due to the circumstance of the husband's misdeeds not being recognized as a reason for a divorce by imperial law.

Thirdly, the perspective of law enforcement sometimes has to be overturned. Legal changes may take into account social expectations or concerns, those precisely attested in the papyri. Justinian's *Code* for instance allows a husband to stand for his wife before a court, without having a mandate.[66] Such a measure, ascribed to Constantine, represents an innovation when compared with classical Roman law. Thanks to papyri, a significant number of judicial or arbitral proceedings concerning women is known: when a married woman was involved, her husband normally played a part in the legal procedure. Thus the provision incorporated into the *Code* probably represents an adaptation to the social norm, such as evidenced in Egypt.[67] The same conclusion applies to Justinian's legislation regarding donations.[68] The dispositions of last wills preserved by papyri show a society firmly resolved to decide beyond recall property devolution after death; a society also trying to secure salvation through pious gifts, at the expense of close relatives. In this respect, Justinian's *Novels* introduced some changes, which took those concerns into account:[69] *Novel* 87 allowed donators to give up the right to revoke their donations; *Novels* 1 and 131 permitted testators to deprive their heirs of the Falcidian share, particularly when pious legacies were concerned. In those cases, it is the imperial legislation which responded to an existing practice, and this practice was precisely the one shown by papyri. The integration of Egypt into the empire is thus illustrated.

Ultimately, the impact of imperial legislation on Egypt during the sixth and seventh centuries appears to have been more or less significant, depending on the legal field concerned, and to have varied according to social status.

[64] Cf. Beaucamp 2001: 7–11. [65] Cf. Beaucamp 1990: 174–7. [66] *Cod. Just.* 2.12.21 (315).
[67] Cf. Beaucamp 2002: 23–40. [68] Arangio-Ruiz 1920: 21–37. [69] Beaucamp 2001: 13.

The picture given above will no doubt be supplemented or refined as new evidence and studies are published. However, two points can be regarded as secure. First, there was no general opposition, out of religious motives, from the population of Egypt towards Justinian's legislation. Secondly, if Egypt shows some specific aspects in the field of law – as in others – it was not any more distinctive in this regard than any other province of the empire.

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CHAPTER 14

Aristocratic landholding and the economy of Byzantine Egypt[1]

Todd M. Hickey

The historiography of the economy of Byzantine Egypt has undergone a dramatic transformation in the last century: the literature has shifted from articulating a regressive, proto-feudal 'servile state' to stating that the province contributed to a 'wave of economic expansion' that arose in the eastern Mediterranean beginning in the fourth and fifth centuries.[2] Central to this sea change have been recent 'rationalizing' interpretations of the 'great estates' belonging to the bureaucratic and military elites who rose to prominence during the period through imperial patronage.[3] That the 'feudal model' is no longer tenable, most would agree; Gascou's seminal 'Les grands domaines, la cité et l'État en Égypte byzantine' delivered the mortal blow twenty years ago.[4] Economic expansion, however, and the importance of aristocratic landholdings for any such expansion are matters requiring further investigation. Notions of the former need (at the least) to be contextualized within the history of the ancient economy (to say nothing of contextualization from the perspective of global history),[5] and research energies must be directed from qualitative description towards quantitative analysis – a task that we cannot treat as impossible, given the wealth of evidence (textual and otherwise) that has been preserved. A similar imperative exists for the matter of aristocratic landholdings. If one argues

[1] I must alert the reader to Zuckerman 2004, which reached me after I had submitted this paper. Zuckerman's stimulating monograph is relevant for several of the topics broached here, including the impact of the Justinianic plague and the social structure of the village of Aphrodite. (I have prima facie reservations about Zuckerman's conclusions concerning the latter issue, but these cannot be explored here.)

I dedicate this contribution to the memory of Robert E. A. Palmer, who introduced me to the study of documentary texts (and whose encouragement and sense of humour I shall not forget).

[2] 'Servile state': Bell 1917, elaborated in Hardy 1931. 'Wave of economic expansion': Sarris 2004a: 69; cf. also, e.g., Banaji 2001. Keenan 1993 provides a nice historiographic survey but of course does not cover the most recent developments.

[3] Cf. Banaji 1999: 204–6. Sarris 2004a: 68: 'highly monetised, highly commodified, bipartite [definition: Sarris 2004a: 64] estates worked by wage-labourers and, perhaps, slaves'.

[4] Gascou 1985. Further discussion: Hickey 2001: 70ff. [5] Cf. the remarks in Saller 2002: 257ff.

that aristocratic wealth in the late antique East increased substantially,[6] it is reasonable, given the primacy of agriculture in the ancient economy,[7] to hypothesize that any late antique economic expansion was tied to the exploitation of elite rural property; but then one is obligated to test one's hypothesis by going deep down into the muck of the evidence, as some recent contributions on the subject have failed to do.[8]

That noted, the problem of the economy of Byzantine Egypt is not an easy one with which to grapple. The same abundance of evidence (at least by the standards of ancient history) that endows the question with such great potential also furnishes a significant hurdle, one made all the higher by the difficulty of controlling essential sources without specialist (papyrological, archaeological, etc.) training. Unedited papyri present obvious problems of decipherment, but a text's challenges do not, as a rule, end on publication. Important volumes of late antique texts contain nothing but the barest transcriptions,[9] and even when substantial energy has been devoted to commentary, the interests of the editor and the historian often do not overlap. It should come as no surprise, then, that despite a surge in interest in the economy of Byzantine Egypt in the last decade or so, the scholarly literature on the topic is hardly plentiful, and much fundamental synthetic work remains (to say nothing of efforts crossing disciplinary boundaries).

The present essay has been written as an entrée into the economy of Byzantine Egypt, or rather, into the study of the aristocratic estates that are believed to have dominated that economy.[10] It also aims to provoke reconsideration of some of the current positions on this topic. Its chronological termini are, roughly, AD 450 and 700. Although certain central late antique economic institutions (e.g., Constantine's rock-stable solidus) and trends (e.g., the commutation of fiscal payments in kind into gold) pre-date this period, it was in the second half of the fifth century that the 'great estates' emerged as a prominent feature on the late antique landscape.[11] At the other

[6] So, e.g., Sarris 2004a: 59–60. [7] Cf., e.g., the assessment in Goldsmith 1987: 34–59.

[8] For example, Sarris 2004a and 2004b draw conclusions based on an imperfect understanding of a basic term (*chôrion*; see Bagnall 1999 and, for the Byzantine Oxyrhynchite in particular, Hickey 2001: 30ff.). Criticisms of this nature are more appropriately addressed elsewhere, but it must be said that the argument in Sarris 2004b concerning the Apions' *autourgia* (285–6), which is critical for the thesis of that paper, is egregiously unsupported. For the Apions' holdings at Oxyrhynchos, see pp. 295–6, 301–3 below.

[9] *SPP* comes most immediately to mind. (Revised versions of *SPP* III and VIII will be appearing shortly.)

[10] Incidentally, the term 'estate' should only be used with the recognition that it does not imply contiguity, cf. p. 295 below.

[11] For the period before 450, see Bagnall 1993.

end of the chronological range, the Islamic conquest of 639–42 disrupted the forces (political, social, and economic) that had created the estates and had permitted them to flourish.[12]

For the most part, I will limit myself to consideration of texts on papyrus; they are absolutely essential for the question of aristocratic landholding (and are more than adequate for the limited goals of this paper). It is the papyrus archives and dossiers – and the rare isolated text like the 562-line estate account preserved in *P.Bad.* IV 95 – that are especially valuable.[13] These are witnesses that, through their accumulation of interrelated data, allow us to ask the kinds of economic questions – about decision-making, risk tolerance, investment, labour deployment, and so forth – that I believe are the most interesting and broadly significant. The 'answers' to these questions are of course impacted by the limitations of the corpus of Byzantine papyri.[14] Because this corpus is dominated by texts from Nile Valley settlements like Oxyrhynchos and Aphrodite, the economic history of Byzantine Egypt, at least when it is at its fullest, is the history of such places, or rather, the history of certain agents in these particular localities – as opposed to the history of these agents' complete portfolios.[15]

The agents in question are invariably those who were educated enough to leave an economic record themselves or wealthy enough to afford scribes – typically the possessors of landed property, be they people or institutions (i.e., the church, including, of course, monasteries, and the state).[16] Less affluent members of society are represented in the documentation only when they become an interest of the propertied (e.g., a tenant, a debtor, the provider of some service, a taxpayer). Even then, such relationships are not always recorded: the extremes of permanence (e.g., customary arrangements) and transience (e.g., casual labour) tend to remain unwritten.[17] The impact of such silence on the investigation of the deployment of labour, for example, is obvious. Needless to say, the fragmentary papyrological record

[12] Cf. Banaji 2001: 156–7. [13] Archives and dossiers: see Martin 1994.

[14] Further discussion: Hickey forthcoming. Bagnall 1995 is an excellent introduction to the employment of papyri for the writing of history.

[15] The holdings of the Flavii Apiones (for which see below, as well as Mazza 2001), so influential in the historiography of the economy of Byzantine Egypt, are well documented only in the Oxyrhynchite; their possessions in other areas in Egypt (e.g., the Herakleopolite), to say nothing of other locales in the empire, are poorly illuminated by the sources.

[16] For the role of the aristocracy in the administration of church and state/imperial holdings, cf. p. 296 below and Banaji 2001: 144 n. 63. Of course lower-level elites (e.g., *clarissimi*) would also administer the estates of those higher up the social ladder, cf. the recently published *CPR* XXIV 29.

[17] As, for the most part, does the economic contribution of women and children; for the situation elsewhere in antiquity, see Scheidel 1995, 1996.

Figure 14.1 Satellite view of Egypt; photo NASA, 1993. (Freely available for use, see http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/useterms.php).

also hinders the documentation of change, including the impact of economically critical events (such as the Justinianic plague) recorded in our literary sources.[18]

Any consideration of landholding (aristocratic or otherwise) in Egypt should begin with the land itself, and a fundamental aspect of the land is the limit of its extent. This limit is not merely an ancient phenomenon: one need only read the current Egyptian government's literature on the 'New Valley Project'[19] or view images from space (see **Fig.** 14.1): fertile land

[18] See, however, n. 33 below. For the Justinianic plague in Egypt, see Sarris 2002 with refs.

[19] Cf. http://www.sis.gov.eg/public/valley/html/valind.htm (17 January 2005).

currently makes up less than 4 per cent of Egypt's area.[20] The upshot of this limitation for the economy of Byzantine Egypt is that the avenues for agricultural investment were somewhat constrained. If one had solidi that one wished to invest in agriculture – for the aristocracy, at least, still the most socially acceptable form of investment[21] – there were no substantial undeveloped tracts available for acquisition.[22] One was left with the option of purchasing others' land or developing one's current holdings. One might also provide credit, which in turn could lead to the acquisition of property.[23] The development of one's land might be accomplished through investment in labour-intensive cash crops like grapes and/or the addition of irrigation machinery, typically during the Byzantine period the *saqiya*, the *mêchanê* or *organon* of the papyri (cf. **Fig.** 14.2).[24] Cash-crop investments often required irrigation expenditures; that is, to a large extent, the development options went hand in hand. The rigidity of the post-Diocletianic tax system no doubt encouraged investments in irrigation, which resulted in more stable yields and allowed for summer watering.[25] The machinery also enabled elevated portions of a property, formerly unwatered, to be brought under cultivation; these were the typical locations for vineyards and orchards.

The expansion of vineyards and orchards was no doubt stimulated by the increased monetization of taxes, such as occurred under the emperor Maurice.[26] The important role of the Byzantine state in crop selection may be seen clearly in the Islamic period: without the artificial demand created by the *annona*, a good portion of the land once sown with wheat came to be planted with the cash crop flax.[27] The papyrological documentation suggests that aristocrats invested significantly in the *saqiya*, which might

[20] http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/eg.html (17 January 2005).

[21] Cf., e.g., *Cod. Just.* 4.63.3 (= *Bas.* 56.1.19).

[22] The Fayyum might be an exception; i.e., it is conceivable that it provided some opportunities for *redevelopment*. The traditional view is that there was a general (and, during the period under consideration here, irreversible) contraction of agricultural land as a result of the breakdown of the irrigation system that began in the third century, but see now Keenan 2003: 138: 'The village topography of the Fayyum was not static but shifting, and not always for the worse. This should be a caution to those who see the late antique Fayyum only in terms of simple decline.' That noted, the net result over the Byzantine and medieval Islamic centuries was surely diminution.

[23] The process is nicely illustrated in *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4397, which reveals in detail how the Flavii Apiones ended up with the property of a terminally indebted *clarissimus* named Diogenes. The Justinianic plague may also have provided opportunities for acquisitions.

[24] There is nothing revolutionary, of course, in seeking profits through viticulture (or, in other regions, oleoculture). The irrigation devices were, however, a more recent development, cf. Bonneau 1993: 105ff., 220ff., and refs.

[25] Cf., e.g., Rowlandson 1996: 63ff.

[26] Monetization of taxes: Gascou 1985: 11 and refs. The classic formulation of the concept is Hopkins 1980 (revised 1995–6).

[27] Mayerson 1997.

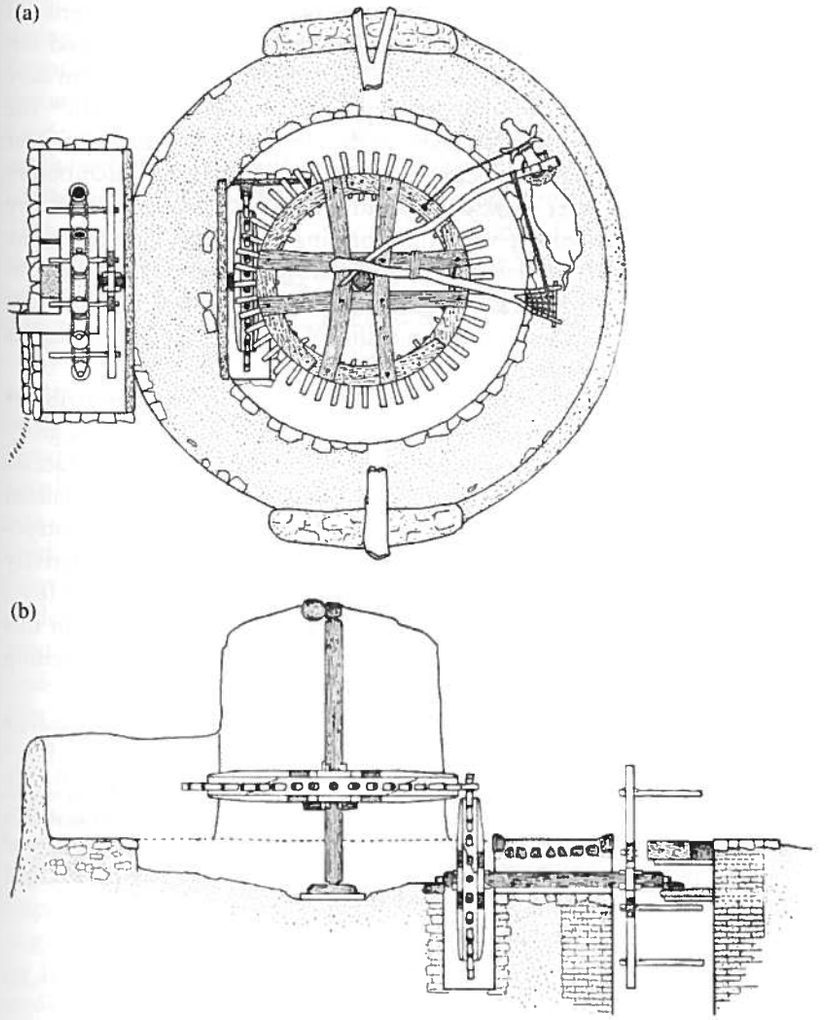

Figure 14.2 (a) Pot-garland and (b) *saqiya* (after M. Venit, *The Monumental Tombs of Ancient Alexandria: The Theater of the Dead*, Cambridge 2002).

be considered a hallmark of their estates.[28] The papyri give us a sense of the yield of these investments, which initially amounted to around ten solidi per installation.[29] The fixed *rent* for about two thirds of an acre of vineland on the Apion estate at Oxyrhynchos was three solidi,[30] the annual wage of a goldsmith's assistant on the estate,[31] and a sum not too far removed from the purchase prices attested for arable land in contemporary papyri.[32] Yet no matter how widespread irrigation technology was, we should hesitate to credit it with transforming economic growth.[33] One could argue persuasively that any growth that it created was not sustainable,[34] and it needs, in any case, to be considered in conjunction with other endogenous factors (e.g., population shifts),[35] as well as exogenous forces like the Justinianic plague.[36]

When we address growth, we must also consider trade, which contributes to growth through the specialization that it allows. In Egypt, the same geography that limited landowners' options also presented them with easy access to markets in the metropoleis, where they might also purchase specialized labour and products (a potential disincentive for autarky).[37] The structure of the land also would have afforded elites, via the Nile, a relatively inexpensive entrée into the great markets in Alexandria and beyond (e.g., Constantinople).[38] The actual extent of landowners' participation in this sort of trade, especially trade outside the borders of Egypt, is an intriguing

[28] Cf. Banaji 2001: 132. *P.Oxy.* XVIII 2197 and XIX 2244 (both from the Apion documentation) are witnesses worthy of special note.

[29] Cf. *P.Bad.* IV 95.457 (twelve solidi less seventy-two keratia). Bonneau 1993: 303, proposes five solidi, which she calls 'lourd'. Of course the parts (wheels, axles, etc.) of the machines would need maintenance and, eventually, replacement (cf. Bonneau 1993: 224), while the humans and animals tending and driving the equipment, respectively, required nourishment, etc. (For the receipts for parts of irrigation machinery, a characteristic feature of the papyrological documentation from the Byzantine Oxyrhynchite, see *P.Oxy.* LXX 4780.)

[30] Hickey 2001: 53ff.

[31] *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3933. For other wages of the period, see tables 11a and 11b in Banaji 2001.

[32] Cf. Johnson and West 1949: 78–9.

[33] As in Banaji 2001. For stagnancy (or worse) on the Oxyrhynchite estate of the Apions, cf. Hickey 2001: 200–2. It occurs to me now that the first gross revenue figure quoted there should reflect the situation in the immediate wake of the plague. The term 'growth' is bandied about carelessly by ancient historians, usually with only vague qualification (e.g., 'significant'). At the least, 'aggregate' or 'per capita' should be employed.

[34] Cf. Saller 2002's remarks on the watermill (265), along with his references (261–2) to recent development literature, which has shifted emphasis from 'exogenous technical innovation to human capital accumulation as the key source of growth and development' (quote from Erlich 1990: S7).

[35] Noted already by Kehoe 2003: 718; cf. also Millett 2001.

[36] Which curiously receives no mention in Banaji 2001.

[37] Cf. Bagnall 1993: 70–1, 78ff.; note also Varro, *RR* 1.16.2–4. The proximity of these urban areas would also facilitate the involvement of elites, at least those of lower statuses, in the management of their property. Sarris 2004b: 305 seems over-optimistic about the involvement of the Apions in their estates.

[38] 'Relatively inexpensive': cf. the discussion of the costs of land and sea transport in Morley 1996: 63–8.

problem.[39] *T.Varie* 3 provides a tantalizing glimpse of long-distance trade; dating to 621 or 636, it documents the shipment of at least 12,700 litres of Egyptian wine to Constantinople by a Hermopolite *emporos*.[40] Recently, this anecdote has been combined with the relatively small numbers of late Egyptian amphorae that have been found at several sites outside Egypt,[41] and it has been concluded that, beginning in the late sixth century, Egyptian landowners felt the need to market their production beyond Alexandria.[42] This seems too hasty; the matter needs additional investigation. Although the opportunity furnished by the *annona* ships, the possibility of tied trade, would seem a promising point of departure,[43] the current ceramic evidence does not support the notion.[44]

The landed property of an Egyptian aristocrat would not have been contiguous; there were no extensive tracts like the *latifundia* of Roman Sicily (or the *latifundios* of contemporary Venezuela). The 'large estate' of Byzantine Egypt par excellence, the one that is the focus of Edward Hardy's 1931 book of similar title, the Oxyrhynchite estate of the Flavii Apiones, was comprised of a multiplicity of holdings, perhaps distributed unevenly (with a greater concentration of property in the north) throughout the Oxyrhynchite nome.[45] The foci for these holdings were the *epoikia*, the settlements, typically the property of a single landowner,[46] that we might render in English as 'farmsteads' or 'hamlets'; on average, five of these were under the control of an administrator, a *pronoêtês*, on the Apion estate.[47] Not all of the land surrounding an *epoikion* was exploited directly; leasing, for a fixed rent in cash or in kind or a fixed share of the yield, is well attested on the Apions' farmsteads.[48] There was no uniform exploitation strategy for the Apions or, for that matter, other landowners, even for plots bearing the same kind of crop, though the crop grown, as well as local practice and tradition, wealth, power, and risk tolerance, was certainly an important factor in the calculus.[49] Throughout Egypt, certain critical tasks (e.g., the year-round work in vineyards and irrigation) might be governed by labour contracts or the so-called 'lease of work' (Greek *misthôsis tôn ergôn*).[50] Labour for seasonal tasks was of course hired as needed.[51] As noted above, temporary arrangements often were not recorded; a series of

[39] That Alexandria exerted a strong economic 'pull' seems unavoidable.

[40] Cf. Banaji 2001: 18 n. 19 and refs. (My figure is lower because I have allowed for smaller *knidia*.)

[41] E.g., those recovered during the excavations at Hagios Polyeuktos in Constantinople, Hayes 1992: 66–7.

[42] Banaji 2001: 158–9. [43] Cf. Wickham 1988. [44] So Kingsley and Decker 2001: 4–5.

[45] Cf. Hickey 2001: 59–61. [46] Cf., e.g., Banaji 2001: 173–4.

[47] Hickey 2001: 69 (pace Banaji 2001: 187 n. 112).

[48] Banaji 2001 and Sarris 2004b place far too much emphasis on direct exploitation; see the case study below.

[49] Cf. Hickey 2001: 75ff. [50] Hickey 2001: 97ff. and refs. [51] Cf., e.g., Bagnall 1993: 121–3.

ostraka in part concerning the vintage on an estate near Abu Mina may provide an exception.[52]

Epoikia were not simply an Oxyrhynchite phenomenon, but there were certainly other solutions to the problem of estate management. One might employ a system of local agents and leases. Such a system, which has been described at Aphrodite by Keenan 1985, would be most appropriate for medium-sized properties and the less concentrated portions of large holdings. The church both employed local aristocrats as managers (Greek *phrontistai*) and leased its property to middlemen, to individuals like Apollos, the father of the poet Dioskoros;[53] often these leases would have been perpetual, that is, *emphyteuseis*.[54] Imperial property was handled in a similar fashion; the first attested member of the Apion family was a *curator* of these estates,[55] and, not surprisingly (given their connections), the Apions continued to be involved with them in later years.[56] The imperial bureaucracy, or rather, imperial methods, very probably had a significant influence on the management of large estates like those of the Apions.[57] Of course smaller properties would generally have been managed (if not worked) directly.

The distribution of land was by no means uniform throughout Egypt. At Oxyrhynchos, the Apions were (as the accounts in the secondary literature might lead one to expect) the dominant private landowner. Their holdings were not, however, as vast as A. H. M. Jones wrote in the *Later Roman Empire*, 112,000 *arourai*, about 75,000 acres or 120 square miles;[58] by my calculation, the family possessed 21,000 *arourai* (5,788 ha) at most.[59] It should not be forgotten that there were other significant players. In the 560s, the *oikos* ('house') of Kometes, the son of the *patricius* John, was assessed a sum half that of the Apions (see **Fig.** 14.3).[60] By way of comparison, the church at Oxyrhynchos was charged an amount roughly 38 per cent of that of the Apions. The wealth of John's family is further indicated by some affidavits of his daughter Christodote; Kometes apparently owed her sixty-one pounds of gold (4,392 solidi).[61] Kometes provides, incidentally, a

[52] Wortmann 1971 (perhaps mirrored in the texts discussed in Fantoni 1991).
[53] Cf. Banaji 2001: 195–6 (with n. 16 above).
[54] *Emphyteuseis*: See *P.Oxy.* LV 3805 and refs.
[55] See Mazza 2001: 52–3.
[56] Later years: see, e.g., *P.Oxy.* XVI 1915. Connections: cf. Mazza 2001: 58.
[57] Banaji 1999: 203.
[58] Jones 1964: 784. 112,000 *arourai* actually ≈ 76,243 acres ≈ 30,853 ha.
[59] Hickey 2001: 71–2.
[60] *Oikos*: an estate 'held in joint ownership and thus immune to the devastating fragmentation of partible inheritance' (so Banaji 1999: 205). Half: the figures could indicate that the Apions possessed (approximately) twice as much land as Kometes, but the sums that were to be collected by the two *oikoi* might have included monies from other landholders (and it is not certain what the basis of assessment was or if it was uniform).
[61] See Keenan 1978 and *P.Thomas* 29. Sixty-one pounds: equivalent to the rent of 1,464 *arourai* of vineland (using the fixed rate prevalent on the Apion estate); other comparisons in *P.Thomas*, p. 252 n. 3.

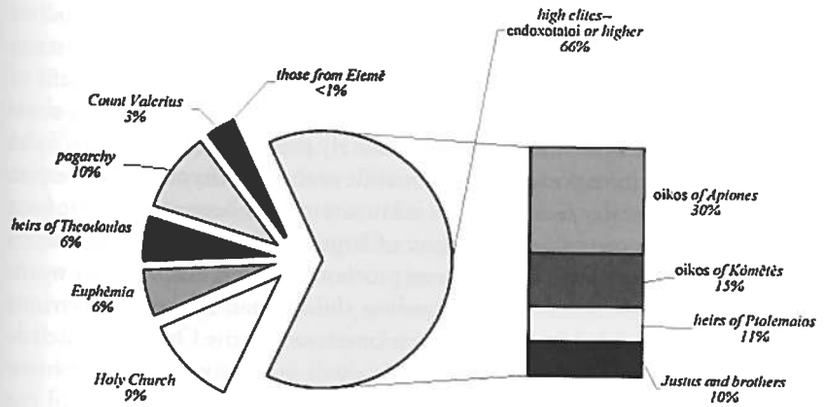

Figure 14.3 *P.Oxy.* 2040 (table created by Todd M. Hickey).

wonderful object lesson about the state of our sources, a caveat for those who would write history from the papyri: though a wealthy and doubtlessly influential man, he is mentioned by all of four papyri, and two of these are copies. Others have noted a 'polarization' of wealth in the Oxyrhynchite,[62] and the available evidence can indeed be interpreted as indicating that the highest elites (more precisely: aristocrats at least possessing the dignity of *gloriosissimus*) owned more land in the district than any other bloc. Since these high elites also had a role in the administration of the property of two other significant landholders, the church and the state, there can be no doubt that they were powers that one could not ignore. Yet I would suggest that too much emphasis has been placed – decades ago and just recently – on these high elites and, for that matter, at the other end of the spectrum, on that portion of their labour force, clearly a small minority, that was governed by the coercive, 'between free and slave' adscripticiate.[63]

[62] Cf. Jördens 1999: 138–9.
[63] 'Small minority': cf. Hickey 2001: 105–6 (on the Apion situation). Lo Cascio 1997 is a good place to begin delving into the scholarly industry that is the late antique colonate. 'Between free and slave' (*metaxu eleutherôn kai doulôn*): a reference from the second-century *Onomasticon* of Julius Pollux (3.83), referring to groups like the helots. But similar locutions have also been used to describe the *coloni*, cf., e.g., Westermann 1945.

The texts actually reveal a much more nuanced social and economic landscape in the Oxyrhynchite, one also populated by lower-level aristocrats and truly substantial 'peasants' (*geôrgoi*).[64] The possibility of mobility, of improvement, has also received little attention. The lower-level aristocrats and, perhaps, mobility are well represented by Flavia Anastasia. Anastasia apparently started out as a *magnificentissima*;[65] she paid only 25 per cent of Kometes' charge in the early 580s,[66] and, unlike the Apions (and a similarly positioned Euphemia in the immediately preceding generation),[67] she appears never to have possessed land outside of the Oxyrhynchite.[68] Despite this, she, or rather her *patrimonium*, is known to have been responsible for a portion of that 'quintessential' *munus* of large landowners, the pagarchy;[69] and before 587 she seems to have been promoted, if that is the proper word, to the rank of *gloriosissima*.[70] Regarding the substantial *geôrgoi*, obvious examples are provided by the headmen (*meizones*) of the Oxyrhynchite villages. The relative wealth of these individuals is clearly indicated by two texts: one a report of *stolen* property with a value of eighty-six solidi;[71] the other, a division of an inheritance valued at 360 solidi.[72] These *meizones* were capable of leasing the Apions' expensive fixed-rate vineyards without the assistance of partners.[73]

The distribution of land appears to have been notably different further south. There were certainly aristocrats in the Hermopolite, but their ranks seem typically to have been lower: *lamprotatos* (*clarissimus*) might be identified as characteristic.[74] If, as seems probable, the Theodora who is referenced in *P.Bad.* IV 95 was the initial owner of the estate documented by that account, then she (given the notable presence of lower-grade aristocratic women in the seventh-century fiscal codex *P.Sorb.* II 69) and her estate of less than 300 *arourai* might be considered representative.[75] No figure is as conspicuous in the late Hermopolite documentation as Hyperechios with his 5,000-plus *arourai* was in the late third and early fourth centuries.[76] A logical hypothesis is that the number of *arourai* devoted to cash crops in the Byzantine Hermopolite was notably lower than in the

[64] Banaji 2001, e.g., records their existence, but they are overshadowed by his emphasis on the great landowners' deployment of wage labour.
[65] Cf. *SB* VI 9368 (surely 577–8). [66] *P.Oxy.* XVI 2020.
[67] Euphemia: cf. *P.Oxy.* LXIX 4755.5n. Possibly also in Fig. 14.3.
[68] None of the texts in her archive (which I am preparing for publication) state that she is a landowner elsewhere, i.e., she is a *geouchousa entautha*, not *kai entautha*.
[69] Pagarchy and large landowners: Banaji 2001: 140–1 and *passim*.
[70] P.bibl. univ. Giss. inv. 44 (unpublished). [71] *P.Oxy.* XVI 2058. [72] *P.Oxy.* I 136.
[73] Cf. *P.Oxy.* LV 3805.68f. (with Hickey 2001: 55 n. 123). See also Banaji 2001: 192.
[74] Cf. *P.Sorb.* II 69.
[75] Theodora as owner: Johnson and West 1949: 57. The estate is one of the case studies below.
[76] Calculation: Banaji 2001: 114 n. 43 (based on *P.Herm.Landl.* 2). Texts: *CPR* VI, pp. 51–105.

Oxyrhynchite, with its more prominent elites. This was certainly the case upriver from Hermopolis in the Antaiopolite nome, where it is extremely unlikely that the entire district (192,753 *arourai*, including waste, according to Bagnall 1993: 334) had even ten times as much vineland as the Apion estate in the Oxyrhynchite.[77]

The documentation for the Byzantine Fayyum is quite fragmentary – less central in its concerns – and much of it was published in the infancy of papyrology;[78] as a result, it is much harder to reconstruct the social and economic landscape there. There surely were landowners with large properties, holders of the patriciate like Flavia Sophia, whose estate has been estimated at 10,000 *arourai*,[79] and Strategios *paneuphêmos*, the monophysite magnate who was instrumental in the union of the Coptic and Jacobite churches.[80] Strategios certainly possessed land throughout the Fayyum, as well as property in the Oxyrhynchite and Herakleopolite nomes.[81] Also worthy of mention is Theodosios, the *dux et Augustalis* of Arcadia, who in 633 made a significant payment of 4,000 artabas of grain, presumably for fiscal dues.[82] The presence of such individuals, in addition to the fact that share tenants in the Fayyum were generally poorer and subject to harsher terms than those elsewhere in Egypt,[83] suggests that the distribution of land in the Fayyum was closer to that in the Oxyrhynchite than that in the Hermopolite. The Fayyum's percentage of vineland was undoubtedly higher than that in either locale, which very probably indicates more land concentrated in the hands of high elites.[84]

Although outright ownership of villages (Greek *kômai*) is attested elsewhere in the empire,[85] there is no explicit testimony for it in Egypt, not even in those areas with a significant presence of high-level elites. This means that, despite the commonplace references to the growth of aristocratic power

[77] For the Antaiopolite, see *P.Cair. Masp.* I 67057 III.4; the Apions, Hickey 2001: 65ff.
[78] By Wessely in the *SPP* series (mentioned above, p. 289).
[79] By Rémondon 1974: 368–9. This article was published posthumously (without notes, etc.); he does not tell us the basis of his estimate. It seems likely that it was *SPP* VIII 1091; if so, it should be recognized that the payments in this text probably include sums for properties besides her own (cf. n. 60 above; the orders for payment from her dossier suggest that she was acting on behalf of a minor son at the least). That noted, Rémondon's estimate does not strike me as unreasonable.
[80] See Palme 1997: 99 and refs.
[81] For Strategios' holdings, see most recently *CPR* XXIV 24–9.
[82] The payment appears in *SPP* X 249 II.8; at the tax rate for arable land in *P.Cair. Masp.* I 67057, it equates with 3,200 *arourai*. (But again, this amount likely includes the payments of others.) For Theodosios, see Banaji 2001: 146, 156, 174–5. Banaji (142 n. 52) suggests that he may have been Sophia's son.
[83] Jördens 1999: 122ff.
[84] Cf. Banaji 2001: 159: 'In the Fayyum almost every major rural site can be associated with wine production even and indeed especially in this late period.'
[85] The purchase of the seaside village Porphyreon by the *rhêtôr* Evangelos (Procopius, *Anecdota* 30.18–19) comes most immediately to mind, but there are other examples.

and large estates during our period, the village, though hardly immune to outside pressures, remained the realm of lesser (and typically local) officials, substantial peasants, and so on, continuing a pattern noted for earlier centuries.[86] The principal difference was in the holdings of the church. The aristocratic presence in the village of Aphrodite was minimal. In the 'Cadastre of Aphroditô' (*SB* XX 14669), the principal landowner is the Monastery of Apa Sourous, with over 300 *arourai* (vineyards and gardens, more than 5 per cent); seven monasteries hold about a third of the total acreage.[87] The fragmentation attested in the Cadastre is noteworthy: the Monastery of Apa Sourous' property is held in over forty parcels. The *comes consistorii* Ammonios is the prominent aristocratic landholder, with under seventy *arourai* in over ten parcels (vineyards and gardens, not surprisingly, more than 10 per cent). The provincial middle bureaucracy is somewhat better represented; the *scholastikos* Theodosios, whose heirs are attested holding about sixty-five *arourai* in at least ten parcels (vineyards and gardens, remarkably, about 18 per cent), might be cited as an example of this group. In the smaller Hermopolite village of Temseu Skordon, the pattern is similar: church payments account for about 15 per cent of the total.[88] In Temseu Skordon, however, even the middle bureaucracy is all but absent.[89]

Though some of the more recent studies concerning the agrarian economy of Byzantine Egypt might leave the impression that landowners like the first-century grammarian Remmius Palaemon were typical,[90] there clearly was diversity in the approaches of elites to the land, in the mentalities that governed their economic behaviour, in their decision-making. This does not mean, of course, that there was no clustering on the spectrum, but one should anticipate variation and even outliers (like Palaemon, in my view). As interesting as the decisions themselves are the fault lines, the factors determining variant behaviours. These all are complicated matters, but a rudimentary examination of them, via two summary case studies of estates belonging to aristocrats at the high and middle to low ends of the socio-economic spectrum, is nonetheless illuminating. The obvious choice for the high end is the well-known (at least in the Oxyrhynchite) *oikos* of the

[86] Cf. Bagnall 1993: 148–9.

[87] *SB* XX 14669: see Gascou and MacCoull 1987. When considering the data in the Cadastre (and the observations made above), it must be remembered that the text does not account for about 75 per cent of the village's land (since the *kômêtika onomata* are missing; for these, see now Zuckerman 2004).

[88] *P.Lond. Copt.* 1075, which is being prepared for publication by Bagnall, Keenan, and MacCoull; I thank Bagnall for this information. See also MacCoull 1987.

[89] Based on the description in MacCoull 1987. Bagnall informs me, however, that the Gini (inequality) index is quite high (.653); the top 30 per cent of the population owns 79.2 per cent of the land.

[90] For Palaemon's 'model' estate, see Pliny, *NH* 14.49–51.

Apion family; while the well-studied Hermopolite estate documented by *P.Bad.* IV 95 seems a good selection for the lower end.[91] An additional study, of Aurelius Phoibammon, the son of Triadelphos, and other members of the village elite of Aphrodite, will provide further points of comparison.[92]

The Apions' Oxyrhynchite *oikos* possesses the most complicated structures that the Byzantine papyri have revealed to date. It was overseen by an extensive management hierarchy, running from the *antigeouchos* (*vice-dominus*, or landlord's representative) down to figures like the foremen (*ergodiôktai*) in the *epoikia*.[93] Alongside those managing or directly engaged in agricultural production was a host of salaried support staff (clerical workers, bankers, and so forth) as well as artisans.[94] There was also a multi-layered system of accounts, more elaborate than any other that has come to light in the late antique period, much more sophisticated than those of, say, Flavia Anastasia.[95] In short, the potential for economies of scale, for the careful management of expenditures, and for other means of increasing profits clearly existed.

Although the *oikos*' owners and management certainly cared about returns, I would propose that other factors (e.g., the *oikos*' extensive fiscal responsibilities and concerns about access to specialized workers) were critical in the development of the complicated apparatus just described. The *oikos* produced a variety of crops, but careful consideration of the extant documentation reveals that only flax and wine were potential market sectors.[96] Quite a lot of wheat was grown, but it has long been recognized that the *oikos* produced little beyond that which was required to pay its fiscal dues and to meet its own consumption and planting needs.[97] Though research has revealed that Oxyrhynchos was a major centre for commercial textile production in the mid-third century (and despite the fact that the former Oxyrhynchite was a major producer of flax for export in the Middle Ages), there is no evidence whatsoever for the Apions' direct involvement with flax production.[98] They may have let out flax land. With wine, the picture is similar: by my estimate, at least 55 per cent of the Apions' vineland was governed by fixed-rent leases in cash.[99] The strong presence of such

[91] Well-studied: see Schnebel 1928, although an investigation taking account of the plethora of revised readings (and involving a re-examination of the extant frames of the papyrus, including the unpublished fragments) would be welcome. The discussion below assumes (for the most part) that Schnebel's data is accurate.

[92] Phoibammon: discussed in detail by Keenan in this volume.

[93] See Mazza 2001: 134–47. [94] Cf. Mazza 2001: 147ff.

[95] These texts are being prepared for publication by the author.

[96] Hickey 2001: 189ff. [97] Hickey 2001: 191 and refs.

[98] Third century: van Minnen 1986, with the criticisms of Bagnall 1995: 80–1. Middle Ages: Udovitch 1999. Apions: Hickey 2001: 197–8.

leases in what was very probably the only significant direct market sector of the *oikos* suggests an aversion to market risk, a desire for safe and consistent income. It is hardly indicative of the proto-capitalism that has recently been argued.[100] My assessment of the *oikos*' marketable surplus in wine confirms this: the wine available for sale after expenditures was certainly worth less than 1,000 solidi, probably much less.[101]

By my calculation, at least 90 per cent of the estate's after-tax income, about 13,000 solidi annually in the mid-sixth century, came from rents.[102] The Apions' predilection for gold has been noted since Hardy's day,[103] but this observation is less important than the family's deployment of the gold itself. Was it invested, or was it employed in such a way that it negatively impacted the wealth of the community? The matter needs further investigation, but a significant portion of the Apions' income must have left rural Egypt, to be expended on things like houses near the Hippodrome in Constantinople and consular diptychs.[104] Much of it was probably accumulated, withdrawn altogether from the economy.[105] It is also clear that the Apions were a powerful special interest group with the ear of some emperors (i.e., the opportunity to take liberties was very likely to have been present). Kehoe has in fact characterized the behaviour of aristocrats like the Apions as rent-seeking.[106] Yet the realities of agricultural investment in late antique Egypt are probably also pertinent to these questions. Relatively speaking, it would not have taken much gold to exhaust the local investment possibilities: an expenditure of 20 per cent of the estate's after-tax income (≈2,600 solidi) on improvements would have been sufficient to build approximately 260 *sawaqi*, enough *mêchanai* to irrigate over 2,000 *arourai*, i.e., about 5.5 km^2.[107] This level of expenditure for irrigation was surely not needed annually (if in any year) on the estate. Pessimism, in any case, should be tempered by the knowledge that we are only seeing one part of the Apion 'enterprise'. We do not know if their other *oikoi* (with different levels of investment, e.g., in viticulture) were managed more aggressively or to what extent rents (etc.) from the conservative Oxyrhynchos branch were

[99] Hickey 2001: 105–6. [100] Banaji 1999: 213. [101] Cf. Hickey 2001: 199ff.
[102] Cf. Hickey 2001: 200-1, where the *analômata* have been misunderstood; they are the taxes.
[103] Hardy 1931: 100.
[104] House near the Hippodrome: Malalas 18.135; for their investments on their Oxyrhynchite *proastion*, see Mazza 2001: 84ff. Consular diptych: *CIL* II 2699. Incidentally, the dimensions of the ivory slabs that make up Apion's diptych are particularly large, measuring nearly 41 × 16 cm each.
[105] Cf. the confiscated fortune of the usurper Heraclian, which included twenty *centenaria* of gold (144,000 solidi; Olympiodorus, frag. 23). It should be noted that Olympiodorus indicates that less gold was found than expected. The sum is about eleven times the after-tax rural income of the Apions' Oxyrhynchite *oikos*.
[106] Kehoe 2003: 718–19. [107] Land irrigated by *saqiya*: Ménassa and Laferrière 1974: 48.

consumed (or invested) elsewhere.[108] We also are ignorant of the family's engagement with non-agricultural sectors like trade. The wealth creation possible in the luxury trade during earlier centuries is simply astonishing.[109]

Moving upriver, the Hermopolite estate documented by *P.Bad.* IV 95 seems to have been managed by a *pronoêtês*, that is, by an individual with the same title as an Apion manager of several *epoikia*;[110] but the Apion estate seems to have had about twenty such units, or *prostasiai*, under the supervision of *pronoêtai*.[111] The receipts in the Hermopolite account consist of rents from various properties: from its land, including, explicitly, orchards, and from buildings and installations, e.g., a bakery, an oil press, dovecotes, and living quarters and/or storage rooms (*kellia*). Cereals contributed about 20 per cent of the average net income from the holdings,[112] and the surface area devoted to cereals has been estimated at 225 *arourai*.[113] The land under fixed-rent money leases almost surely did not exceed seventy-five *arourai*.[114] The estate also included vineyards, and these may well have been exploited directly or governed by sharecropping agreements (i.e., not reflected in the cash rent figures).[115] References to the purchase of empty jars are not terribly helpful; there are too many unknowns.[116] Some of the vessels in question could have been for wine that had been purchased, since sales in advance often specified that the purchaser would supply the jars.[117] Mentions of freight charges for the transport of wine are similarly ambiguous; they could reference either 'home-grown' or purchased wine.[118]

The owners of the Hermopolite estate were not oblivious rentiers; the account reveals their direct intervention in the estate's affairs.[119] The owners probably lived nearby. Though the prejudice for gold that we have seen

[108] Possibilities elaborated: cf. the remarks in Campbell 1997: 853–84.
[109] Rathbone 2001. For trade with the East during our period, see Mango 1996.
[110] Schnebel 1928: 34. He raises the possibility of other *pronoêtai*; I would be surprised by their existence.
[111] Cf. Hardy 1931: 82.
[112] Average net income: Johnson and West 1949: 57. The account covers four indictions.
[113] Johnson and West 1949: 58.
[114] Estimate = the highest (theoretical) amount of cash receipts attested in *P.Bad.* IV 95 (*c.* 223 solidi) divided by the fixed-rate vineyard rent on the Apion estate (three solidi/*aroura*) ≈ seventy-four *arourai*. One would expect, however, that vineyards and orchards accounted for considerably less than 25 per cent of the owner's acreage, cf. Hickey 2001: 71–2.
[115] Cf. Schnebel 1928: 42, who notes, however: 'In the main . . . we must be dealing with new plantations of vineyards.'
[116] Line 313 (originally read: empty jars for sixty-six *arourai*) has been corrected, cf. *BL* XI 13. The maximum annual purchase is 5,381 jars (ninth indiction; a check of l. 236 (on a digital image) reveals 480 *mikra* in addition to the eighty *megala* indicated by *BL* XI 12).
[117] Jakab 1999 with Hickey 2001: 114.
[118] Freight charges: lines 227 (eighteen keratia), 330 (six keratia); cf. Schnebel 1928: 42.
[119] Cf. Schnebel 1928: 35 n. 3.

on the Apion estate is also present here,[120] the intensity and damage of any rent-seeking, given the owners' undoubted residence in Egypt and probable lack of high-level connections, were certainly much lower.[121] The accounts reveal that significant amounts of money were rolled back into the estate. The owners invested between 5 and 10 per cent of their net income in irrigation.[122] They seem to have acquired additional land during the years covered by the account, conceivably through purchase or money-lending,[123] and they invested between 15 and 30 per cent of their annual net income in (non-irrigation) improvements, principally in the development of a vineyard.[124] This investment diminished only 6 per cent in the face of a 19 per cent reduction in receipts during the year in which the inundation failed.[125] It would be wrong to suggest that the property was managed like a proto-capitalist enterprise – there clearly were steps that the owners could have taken had they wished to increase their profits – but the impression that one gets from the documentation (which sadly is not as rich or informative as that for the Apions) is that the desire for a secure income was more in balance with that for expansion and gain.

For less risk aversion (and more acquisitiveness), one must (typically) look around the edges of the aristocratic estates or to the villages. Aurelius Phoibammon, the son of Triadelphos, is a good representative of this group, but others might just as easily be put forward.[126] Phoibammon, who is attested in about two dozen documents dating to the middle two quarters of the sixth century, was a member of the village elite, one of the *ktêtores* (landowners) of the *kômê* of Aphrodite. He thrived on the social and economic conditions of his village – on the relative absence of high aristocrats; the predominance of institutional landowners; and the presence of holdings of low-level elite absentees. The last two of these needed labour to work their properties, and Phoibammon supplied it, by becoming a tenant and then subleasing or directly managing the leasehold. Though it now appears

[120] Banaji 2001: 224: 'Wheat taxes work out to 28.39% of receipts [sic; 'targets' is more accurate], money taxes to 9.30%.' Cf. also Schnebel 1928: 38: 'Of the total tax yield for the 9th–11th ind[ictions] . . . almost 47.33% [of the solidi] are defrayed in kind, while we have seen above that payments in kind figure at only 23.55% of the quota of receipts.' Schnebel attributes this emphasis to the state. Note also Olympiodorus frag. 41, which states that Roman *oikoi* of the first class received 75 per cent of their revenue *in specie*.

[121] Regarding expenditures on the 'private account' of the *kyra*, see Schnebel 1928: 43.

[122] Schnebel 1928: 44. These investments did not prevent the loss of over fifty-one solidi as a result of a poor inundation during the eleventh indiction.

[123] Cf. Schnebel 1928: 36 (regarding the *geôrgion tou Ônianiskou*).

[124] Schnebel 1928: 41, 44. Though I would quibble with an item or two that he classifies under 'improvements', I would not dispute the emphasis.

[125] Schnebel 1928: 44. [126] Cf. Keenan 1985. For the Oxyrhynchite, cf. Hickey 2001: 206–7.

that he may have also benefited via inheritance, that he did not rise up from a subsistence existence,[127] there can be no doubt that his economic activities (which, critically, also included providing credit) enabled him to continue to add to his portfolio. Keenan refers to him as an 'entrepreneur,'[128] and this he certainly was, though more in the sense of someone who bears risk for others, and who brings together various agents, than in the sense of an economic innovator.

Phoibammon seems to have retained the lower-status *gentilicium* Aurelius throughout his life.[129] Elevation to the Flaviate – crudely put, to the 'upper class' – is, however, attested in the family of the poet Dioskoros.[130] Dioskoros' father Apollos behaved in much the same way as his sister's son-in-law Phoibammon and was similarly successful;[131] in an imperial rescript, he is called the premier landowner of the village.[132] Near the end of his life he comes to be referred to as Flavius Apollos, for reasons that are not clear.[133] His son's elevation to the Flaviate, in contrast, is readily explainable: it is the direct result of an investment that Apollos made in human capital, the consequence of the money he expended on Dioskoros' education, which opened doors into the law and civil service.[134] In other words, Dioskoros' social advancement owed something significant to Aphrodite itself, that is, to his being the product of an environment that was relatively free from aristocratic interests and demands.

The story is an appealing one (at least to someone rooted in the rural Midwest), but we must not let it carry us away. Aphrodite was hardly a free-market paradise; Dioskoros' own papers make clear its sufferings at the hands of rapacious officials.[135] And Dioskoros himself seems much more exception than rule; he does not define the experience of village elites, but provides one endpoint of a spectrum. Though one can certainly draw parallels between his life and those of the 'wandering poets',[136] Dioskoros was functioning in a completely different stratum;[137] instead of globetrotting with a dancing parrot,[138] he would remain (like other Aphroditans) firmly grounded in his home town. On two occasions he did visit Constantinople,[139] and one might imagine him crossing paths with Apion II, the former

[127] Keenan, this volume, p. 237 with refs. [128] Keenan, this volume, p. 235.

[129] *Gentilicia*: see Keenan 1973, 1974.

[130] For a similar 'promotion', see now *P.Oxy.* LXVIII 4686. [131] Cf. Keenan 1984.

[132] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024.3, *kektêmenon prôton genomenon*. The perspective is local.

[133] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67126 (541.i.7).

[134] Cf. Fournet 1999: 688. (That Dioskoros was a *scholastikos* has been disputed recently, see van Minnen 2003: 130 n. 44.)

[135] Cf. Fournet 1999: 317ff. One must allow for rhetoric, of course.

[136] 'Wandering poets': Cameron, chapter 2 of this volume. [137] Cf. Fournet 1999: 688.

[138] The allusion is to Olympiodorus (frag. 35). [139] Fournet 1999: 318–21.

consul ordinarius, perhaps near the colonnade of Moschianos; their social and economic trajectories, however, would never, could never, cross.

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CHAPTER 15

Gender and society in Byzantine Egypt[1]

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Gender has long been accepted as 'a useful category of historical analysis',[2] but how can gender be a useful category for the study of Byzantine Egypt? Thanks to its rich varieties of documentation and archaeological evidence, the multicultural nature of its society and the gendered divisions within its life, Byzantine Egypt offers a promising field for gender studies. Past work has tended to concentrate primarily on identifying women in textual sources, extrapolating their roles and positions from this material, and then comparing the situation of women in Egypt to that of women elsewhere in the Byzantine world. More recently, scholars have begun to address wider and more complex issues of gender and sexuality, but much remains to be done. We have only really begun to understand the extent and nature of the evidence and the questions that can be asked of it. Instead of a premature attempt to build an overarching theory of gender in Byzantine Egypt, the present paper will survey previous scholarship and explore potential for future research.

It has long been unnecessary to preface a study on gender with a justification; the subject is now so firmly entrenched as a field of inquiry. It is, however, still necessary to explain just what one means by 'gender'.[3] Neither simply a synonym for 'sex' in the biological sense nor a euphemism for 'women', 'gender' can be defined basically as the set of social constructions relating to, arising from, and imposed upon biological sex. The study

[1] I would like to thank symposium organizer Roger Bagnall and symposium participants and attendees (especially Peter Brown) for their comments and suggestions, as well as Mark Masterson for thoughts on masculinity studies. I began my study of gender in Byzantine Egypt around the time that I met Dominic Montserrat in 1990. For nearly fourteen years afterwards, I had the ongoing benefit of Dominic's insightful comments on my work, in addition to his enthusiasm, encouragement, and friendship, all of which I have greatly missed since his death in 2004. I would like to dedicate this chapter to Dominic's memory.
[2] In the words of feminist historian Joan Scott's defining article on the subject (1986).
[3] The literature on gender and gender studies is enormous; in addition to specific works cited in the course of this paper, a useful general reference for the current state of gender studies is Meade and Wiesner-Hanks 2004.

of this wider category of gender first appeared as a direct development of feminist research devoted to bringing women to the forefront of inquiry, identifying individual women and groups of women previously neglected or ignored by researchers, and restoring women to the whole. As feminist scholars proceeded in this endeavour, they came to realize that these steps were not necessarily enough, that they needed to consider women within a larger context of gendered relations and roles, and that, moreover, the basic category of 'women' could be simplistic and reductive, as its meaning constantly shifted and adapted in response to social, cultural, and even biological factors. Gender studies had its roots in the social and political development of feminism, and heightened awareness of gender-related issues. One of the defining moments in gender studies came with the publication of feminist historian Joan Scott's 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' in 1986. Scott's essay remains essential reading; the priorities that she laid out have proven extremely prescient in terms of the concerns of scholarship on gender today. Scott was already envisioning gender as part of a larger group of factors (including class or status, race or ethnicity, and age) central for historians in any field.

Although there have long been contributions on specific points of interest, the systematic study of gender in the society of Byzantine Egypt had its most immediate roots in classical studies, specifically in the work of feminist scholars devoted to identifying the largely ignored women and restoring them to our understanding of the classical world. The pioneering research of Sarah Pomeroy (1975) was crucial in the early history of this endeavour. Scholars of the Byzantine world also have contributed much to the specific study of women in Byzantine Egypt. The state of the study of gender in the Byzantine world has been admirably summed up by Liz James (1997).[4] Note specifically the important studies that are essential for understanding gender in early Byzantine law and society: Joëlle Beaucamp's monumental *Le statut de la femme à Byzance* (1990, 1992),[5] Jens-Uwe Krause's equally monumental work on widows in the later Roman world (1994–5), and Antti Arjava's *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (1996). Finally, the earlier Egyptian background, out of which some elements of society in Byzantine Egypt arose, has been treated in essential works of the past two decades.[6]

The study of gender in Byzantine Egypt has in part arisen out of other fields of research, but it has largely been shaped by the more specific concerns of the scholars who study Byzantine Egypt as a whole. These include the art

[4] Note, for example, works by Peter Brown (1988), Gillian Clark (1993), Averil Cameron (1997), and Aline Roussel (1988), among others, which relate in some way to Byzantine Egypt.
[5] Note the review article Bagnall 1995. [6] The standard survey being Robins 1993.

and material culture as well as the Christian literature of Byzantine Egypt, both being areas in which gender is increasingly being taken account of, and especially the study of the early history of monasticism in Egypt. But the area of Byzantine Egyptian studies that has perhaps had the strongest impact on how gender has been studied is documentary papyrology, the study of the Greek and Coptic papyrus documents of daily life. Papyrology, indeed, has largely driven the study of gender in Byzantine Egypt and firmly placed it in the context of Byzantine Egyptian society. The impetus for this study has come in part from work on earlier Graeco-Roman Egypt: the classic studies of Deborah Hobson (1983), Sarah Pomeroy (1984, 1988), and Edgar Kutzner (1989), among others, on aspects of women's life in the (Greek) papyri. Scholarship on gender in Byzantine Egypt has tended to focus specifically on women and to be presented in the larger context of Graeco-Roman Egyptian society. One of the central products of this endeavour is the sourcebook *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, prepared by the International Workshop on Papyrology and Social History under the editorship of Jane Rowlandson (1998). Here documents relating to women's lives are presented thematically, showing relationships between Egypt in the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, with emphasis on Greek papyri and on women specifically rather than the wider issues of gender. Another major work, Dominic Montserrat's *Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (1996), again uses papyrological evidence across the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine periods. But this work takes into account more of the indigenous language sources and is among the few substantive works to address wider issues of gender. One of the more exciting recent projects in this area is Roger Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore's *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt*.[7] Again, we have Byzantine Egyptian material discussed in the wider context of Graeco-Roman Egypt, and again we have a concentration on the identification of women in the sources. But this project shows great innovation in its format and approach: designed both as a traditional printed book and an online 'e-book' with full databases of the texts it covers, *Women's Letters* provides a sophisticated multi-level analysis of its material and crosses the traditional language lines between Greek and Coptic quite effortlessly. This project is an essential reference and source for women in Byzantine Egypt and an example for future corpus-based projects.

Other studies have concentrated more exclusively on the Byzantine period: there have, of course, been many individual and specific contributions to the study of women in Byzantine Egypt, and wider research on

[7] Bagnall and Cribiore 2006; note also the earlier summary in Bagnall 2001 (and thanks to Roger Bagnall for permission to refer to a pre-publication version of the book in preparation for this essay).

women in early Byzantium in general often draws on the rich Greek papyrological evidence from Egypt (the works by Beaucamp, Krause, and Arjava on law mentioned earlier, for example). Women's literacy in Byzantine Egypt has been a topic of special interest (e.g., Sheridan 1998, Delattre 2001, etc.). To a large extent, papyrologists' interest in women has entered the mainstream of scholarship quite effortlessly. Thus, in Roger Bagnall's *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (1993), for example, concern with women is taken as a given: women's lives and concerns are treated alongside those of men in a matter-of-fact way.

Scholars of gender in Byzantine Egypt, then, are in a good position in terms of the collection and identification of relevant material relating to women, while much analytic work remains to be done with these sources. But this is, of course, only part of the picture. The very category of 'women' has often been accepted as an unchallenged, unitary constant, leaving aside the many variations and nuances on this category. Concentration on women has had the advantage of restoring them to the wider record and bringing them to the forefront of study, an essential prerequisite for wider considerations of gender. But, paradoxically, the concentration on women has resulted in a neglect of the gendered understanding of 'men', hitherto such a dominant, even normative, category. Those of us who work on Byzantine Egypt see men in a variety of contexts and activities, but little or no work has been done on treating men from a gendered perspective.

Concentration on 'men' as a gendered category can be a tricky and problematic issue; some feminist scholars have been suspicious of the newer field of 'masculinity studies' as having at least the potential to undo decades of progress in feminist scholarship and reinforce outmoded masculinist paradigms. There is, however, an emerging body of theoretical literature on issues relating to men from a gendered perspective that addresses these concerns and makes it clear that masculinity studies have great potential. Medieval historians are very much in the forefront and two works are especially relevant for the present essay. One is the 1994 edited volume *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Lees 1994), which provides a wealth of examples and suggestions of how to approach this topic in its diverse essays on medieval history and literature. More recently, Ruth Karras, one of the leaders in this area of study, has published a major monograph, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (2003), that provides a useful example of how one might tackle this topic in a wider social and cultural context. This emphasis on medievalists' work in this area is not meant to downplay work in fields closer to the study of Byzantine Egypt: classicists and Byzantinists have

begun to make important contributions in this area too.[8] However, the varying constructions of men and masculinity in Byzantine Egypt seen through a gender studies perspective remain, ironically, a greatly neglected area.

While widening the study of gender to include the study of constructions of men and masculinity, it is also important to expand the terms of inquiry beyond a bipolar conception of gender as consisting of 'women' and 'men' to encompass additional gender categories. Scholarship on the wider Byzantine world has helped blaze a trail through studies of 'third' gender categories,[9] most notably that of eunuchs. This research[10] has been significant not only to the study of Byzantine society, but also to the wider field of gender studies, as it attempts to come to terms with more complex gender categories (reflecting, in turn, an increasing understanding of the subtleties and indeterminacies of biological sex). For Byzantine Egypt, the work that seems most applicable in this area has been the study on the fluidity of gender categories found in literary texts. I would note the seminal work of Elizabeth Castelli on gender transformations in the literature of Byzantine Egypt (1991), which in turn develops from and into scholarship in the wider field of early Christianity. Similarly, studies on female 'transvestite' saints have dealt with the gender-related issues this raises.[11] Surveys of earlier indigenous Egyptian material have tended to see a strong male/female gender dichotomy, but a recent article on the subject by Mark Depauw (2003) has effectively exploded this understanding and suggests new areas for future research for scholars of Byzantine Egypt. Depauw's work may ultimately highlight indigenous Egyptian precedents for 'other' genders in Byzantine Egypt to go along with the more familiar Mediterranean-wide constructs of the eunuch and hermaphrodite.

Scholarship on 'third' or 'other' gender categories often appears in the context of the study of sexuality, another area in which the inquiry on gender in Byzantine Egypt needs to be expanded. Modern understandings of sexuality are intimately intertwined with understandings of gender, although there is considerable debate whether this is equally the case in other times and other cultures. Much of the current study of sexuality is founded on work done on ancient Greek and Roman sources. Indeed

[8] See, for example, Barber 1997 and the recent catalogue for the exhibition 'What is a Man: Changing Images of Masculinity in Late Antique Art' (Kampen et al. 2002).
[9] For a good general discussion of this concept, see Herdt 1994.
[10] Including the works of K. Ringrose (1994) and S. F. Tougher (1997). For a useful survey of relevant material from Persian period Egypt, see Vittmann 2000.
[11] See discussion in Hotchkiss 1996, Wilfong 1998, and Wipszycka 2002.

the fundamental work on sexuality by Michel Foucault, especially his multi-volume *Histoire de la sexualité* (1976–84), centres on the classical world, as does the essential pioneering work of, among others, David Halperin (1990) and Amy Richlin (1983). Scholars of early Christianity, such as John Boswell and Bernadette Brooten,[12] have also made important and provocative contributions in this area.

For the relationships between gender and sexuality in Byzantine Egypt, again Dominic Montserrat in *Sex and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt* has given us a nuanced and theoretically sophisticated reading that will be an essential starting point for future research. Recent publications of scholars such as Heike Behlmer (2000) have shown that there is much exciting work being done and the promise of much more to be done. Sexuality in Byzantine Egypt has been a special research interest of mine, and I would in particular note the work on the discourse of homoerotic desire in monastic contexts, where such desires were often condemned as negative 'friendship' (2002a), and on homoeroticism and gender-based violence in Coptic martyrdoms (1998). Part of the challenge that faces any scholar looking at sexuality in Byzantine Egypt has been in finding and interpreting evidence: how we recognize and understand the often ambiguous sources while trying not to impose modern constructions and biases on them. In part, many of the difficulties of dealing with the evidence can be overcome by the use of recent theoretical methodologies of the study of sexuality in other fields.

In particular, the approaches and strategies found in the diverse field covered by the rubric 'Queer Theory' may prove helpful in looking for gendered sexualities in Byzantine Egypt. Queer Theory is a shifting, developing set of ways of looking at sexualities while questioning the very concept, and along with it our understandings of sex, gender, and other categories.[13] It grew out of more traditionally based gay and lesbian studies, which in turn arose from the early gay rights movement and the attempt to recover the neglected histories of sexual minorities. As with feminist history, the development of Queer Theory has been deeply linked to the political context of its development. Queer Theory has provided an important sense of flexibility and freedom lacking in much of the earlier study of the history of sexuality, and again the work of medievalists provides perhaps the best examples of what

[12] Note especially Boswell 1980 and Brooten 1996. Both of these authors have been to some extent demonized as 'essentialists' by the upholders of Foucauldian social constructionist orthodoxy, but note Foucault's own relatively bemused response to Boswell (Foucault 1989: 211–12).

[13] There is already a very wide body of literature on this subject; note especially the introductory survey Jagose 1996 and the more recent survey in Sullivan 2003.

can be done in this regard. I would especially note the recent edited volume *Queering the Middle Ages* (Burger and Kruger 2001), with its wide range of tactics and approaches to sexuality by way of Queer Theory. So far, Queer Theory has been largely applied to literary material, but the documentary and archaeological evidence of Byzantine Egypt seems equally amenable to this approach. It is not inconceivable, indeed it is quite a welcome prospect, to envision some future volume called *Queering Byzantine Egypt*: there is certainly much material that could benefit from this approach.

With these approaches and methodologies for the study of gender in Byzantine Egypt in mind, it is time to look at some bodies of evidence and areas of inquiry where they might be applied. So much evidence comes from monastic communities that they are an obvious area for the study of gender. Monastic communities were, at least in part, segregated from the population at large and form conveniently discrete data sets for the study of gender. They are, in a way, almost 'laboratories' in which we can test ideas and theories about the understandings of gender in the population at large. The very nature of monasticism in Egypt, as set up by its earliest founders, was explicitly gendered. Nearly all monasteries in Byzantine Egypt were sex-segregated in some way, either as separate communities, or separate houses for men and women within a single community. In the case of the latter, relations between the separate groups were asymmetrical: women's houses were always ultimately in the charge, to some extent, of male authorities. This phenomenon has been studied with great sensitivity to issues of gender for the White Monastery of Shenoute by Rebecca Krawiec (2002); her work and the earlier study by Susanna Elm on women in Egyptian and Syrian monasticism (1994) have given us very valuable insights into gendered relations in monastic communities, largely through literary evidence, the writings of Shenoute and his successors and contemporaries.[14] The contentious relationships between male monastic heads and the women's community at the White Monastery inspired Shenoute to devote much of his writings to this topic, with the result that there is much material for the understanding of gender roles, expectations, and relations within this monastery. With the excavations of Shenoute's White Monastery also involving a number of scholars who have great interest in gender-related issues, the overall study of gender at the White Monastery is both well underway and in good hands.

To open up use of these monastic 'laboratories' of gender still further, I would suggest a concentration on other, less thoroughly studied

[14] Note also the use of this material in Brooten 1996, Foat 1996, and Wilfong 2002a.

monasteries, such as the women's monastic community housed in the pharaonic temple known as the Osireion at Abydos.[15] This community is well known from the writings of its male supervisor, Moses of Abydos, who wrote a series of letters to the women there. But the evidence goes well beyond literary sources: the remains of the monastery itself were excavated. Excavation revealed a wide range of material, the most unusual of which is a series of graffiti which relate to the duties of the women within their monastery. A careful, gendered, reading of these various bodies of evidence in conjunction with each other, and compared to the material from Shenoute's nearby monastery, could reveal much, especially when taking into account other social axes like status and age. Communities thus documented can provide a valuable check on the trends seen in monasteries known mostly from literary sources and permit comparison of practices in relation to the ideals promulgated in, for example, the highly literary productions of monastic heads like Shenoute.

Even a cursory study of documentary evidence from monasteries in Byzantine Egypt will quickly reveal that the boundaries of these sex-segregated communities were, to varying degrees, permeable and flexible. This too is an area which calls for further investigation; I attempted to do something along these lines for the Monasteries of Phoibammon and Epiphanius in the context of my study of the women of the nearby town of Jeme (Wilfong 2002b: 99–104 and 110–12, respectively). Although both monasteries were exclusively for men and access to them seems to have been restricted, the documentary evidence shows that women who lived in the region, especially the female relatives of the monks, played extensive roles in the functioning and survival of the communities. Women were key parts of informal supply and communication networks that helped keep monks provisioned and informed, especially monks who left the community for (temporary) solitary devotions in the desert. Sarah Clackson suggested similar roles for women in the documentation she published from the Hermopolite monasteries of Apa Apollo at Bawit (Clackson 2000: 8, 27). As more documents from these communities at Bawit appear, we are likely to have a very fertile field for investigation of this phenomenon.

Given the sex-segregated nature of Egyptian monasticism, it is not surprising that there exists a fair amount of evidence for homosexual activity and relations, most of which appears in the form of theoretical and practical condemnations. Only very indirectly do we sometimes get what seems to be self-expression of homoerotic desire; the majority of our evidence comes

[15] See references in Piankoff 1958–60 and the discussion in Wilfong 2002b: 109–10.

from hostile monastic heads who recorded the punishment of specific individuals and inveighed more generally against homosexual activity within their communities. Homosexual relations and desire are often expressed, in these contexts, in terms of a negative 'friendship' (see Wilfong 2002a). There is still much work to be done on this evidence in terms of sexuality (not to mention factors of age and status), but it also raises other questions in terms of gendered relations between monks that are not necessarily sexual but may have a strong emotional component.

One sees frequent evidence of close associations, even partnerships of some sort, between male monks, and, with the warnings of monastic authorities against 'friendships' between individual monks (as either leading to or euphemistic for homosexual relations), there would have been considerable caution in the ways in which these associations between monks were understood and expressed. The recent posthumously published book by Alan Bray, *The Friend* (2003), is an extraordinary study of the understandings of male friendship in the medieval and early modern period, and gives us approaches that could easily be applied or adapted for Byzantine Egyptian material. The correspondence of the Theban monk Frange and his circle seems especially appropriate for such an investigation. Frange's published letters attest to his sometimes emotional and volatile relations in close associations with other male monks that could be most fruitful for a gendered reading.[16] The fact that large numbers of new documents from Frange's correspondence have been discovered in good archaeological contexts very recently make this material even more appealing.[17]

Another area that would repay further gendered investigation would be the cults of male and female saints. Numerous recent publications, including the essays in David Frankfurter's *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (1998), Stephen Davis' *The Cult of Saint Thecla* (2001), and Arietta Papaconstantinou's landmark *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides* (2001), suggest many possible lines of inquiry on the importance of gender in the cults and pilgrimages of saints in Byzantine Egypt. Davis' work in particular provides an important model for approaches to a gendered reading for this material. We see significant gendering in the cults and pilgrimages of Saint Thekla in Davis' study; it remains to be seen whether the cults of other female or even male saints would show similar patterns of gendering. The cult of Menas at Abu Mina

[16] See, in particular, the letters *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 138–40, which record an emotional quarrel between Frange and an associate.

[17] For the Frange correspondence, see now Boud'hors and Heurtel 2002, and for the archaeology Heurtel 2002, 2003.

in particular would seem to be an ideal subject for such a study;[18] the extensive cult centre that grew up around the Menas shrine has been the object of intensive archaeological investigation, and this material is ripe for a gendered reading.

Archaeological evidence remains perhaps one of the least-exploited bodies of material for gender in Byzantine Egypt, one that would repay examination in all categories but perhaps especially monastic archaeology; gender research could well develop on the lines of Roberta Gilchrist's remarkable book *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (1994), which studied the archaeology of gender in women's monastic communities in medieval England.[19] Gilchrist's study showed a wide range of specifically gendered features in monastic architecture that had been previously unnoticed, while also adducing a wealth of archaeological evidence for gendered activities and identities and pointing out the ways in which archaeological evidence can be interrogated for information on gender. Gilchrist is a particularly useful model because she uses material that is close to the monastic archaeology of Byzantine Egypt.[20]

Specialists in Byzantine Egypt themselves have made important contributions in the area of gender and archaeology already.[21] Given the increasing amount of attention being paid to the archaeology of the towns and villages of Byzantine Egypt in recent years, both through new projects and reinterpretation of material from past excavations, the archaeology of gender will need to be applied well beyond the range of monasteries. I have tried to demonstrate the relevance of archaeological evidence to the study of gender at Jeme (2002b, 2003). This should be done as a matter of course when working with any archaeological material, and the increasing emphasis on town sites in the Fayyum and Western Desert will provide much material for such research. I would also suggest the potential of gendered investigations of non-standard communities like mining camps and military forts. A settlement such as Bir Umm Fawakhir, a gold-mining camp of the Byzantine period in Egypt's eastern desert,[22] raises many questions relevant to the study of gender. Was this, as is often supposed, an all-male encampment

[18] See Grossmann 1998 in general for Abu Mina.

[19] Note also Gilchrist's more recent work on archaeology and gender (1999).

[20] Cf. also, e.g., the ground-breaking collection of essays *Gender and Archaeology* edited by Joan Gero and Margaret Conkey (1991).

[21] Note especially the collection of essays edited by Thelma Thomas (1998) and published as a special issue of *BASP*, in which the works of Rebecca Krawiec (1998) and Elizabeth Bolman (1998) are especially important for understanding issues of space and gender within the context of physical remains of monastic communities.

[22] See Meyer 2001 for a survey of the first seasons of work on the site.

and, if so, do archaeological features reflect this? How does the material culture of such a settlement differ from those in the Nile Valley, and are these differences attributable to gender?

There are certainly further bodies of known evidence from Byzantine Egypt for gendered investigation: non-monastic documentary and literary evidence in particular seems to be in need of attention. The extensive archive of sixth-century poet and lawyer Dioskoros of Aphrodite, for example, seems to be an ideal area for the investigation of gender. These papers allow us to investigate gender in private and public documents, as well as in the effusions of the only poet of antiquity from whom we have autograph manuscripts.[23] Dioskoros' documentary activities took place in a largely male world, but one in which women appear in a number of economic and social guises, while his poetry draws on earlier classical imagery for its understandings of gender roles and relations. Dioskoros' bilingual archive would also permit investigation of other social factors relating to gender: status, age, and even ethnicity, or at least linguistic identification. There are many other archives and literally thousands of single documentary texts from Byzantine Egypt, in Greek and Coptic, that could amply repay a gendered investigation from many angles. One must not also forget the wealth of inscriptional evidence from Byzantine Egypt; graffiti in particular would seem to be a promising set of sources.

But, in addition to expanding inquiry on gender in Byzantine Egypt to looking at known bodies of evidence in new ways, I would also suggest expanding this inquiry beyond the traditional chronological and geographical boundaries of Byzantine Egypt. It would certainly be relevant to investigate what happened to understandings of gender roles and relationships after Egypt was lost to Byzantine rule and after the social and cultural transitions of Egypt into the early Islamic period. In some ways, this might also serve to make our inquiry more accessible to wider areas within Byzantine studies, where the traditional periods of study go so much later than in Egypt specifically. To expand the chronological boundaries of our inquiry, there is certainly a wide range of documentation. Indeed, practically any material from Egypt under post-Byzantine rule onwards could be grist for this particular mill. I would suggest a more limited group of material: the later Coptic documentary texts from Egypt that are relatively extensive but underutilized. Part of the reason for this is that many of these texts are unpublished or summarily published as *descripta*.[24]

[23] For which, see MacCoull 1988, Fournet 1999, and references therein.

[24] For the latter, note the documents in the later sections of *P.Ryl.Copt.* and *P.Lond.Copt.* I; in general, see Richter 2002: 155–65, and the work cited in the following note.

Obviously, fuller investigation of this body of documentary material will have to await further publication of texts, but for now one might examine a convenient subset of these documents, the so-called Teshlot archive, a group of thirteen documents of the eleventh century.[25] A gendered reading of the Teshlot papyri shows a world somewhat different from that seen in, e.g., the Bawit or Jeme papyri of a few centuries earlier. Women are absent as active participants in the transactions recorded, appearing only as relatives or as parts of larger groups dominated by men. Women benefit passively from transactions, most notably a wife gaining from a testamentary gift in document 7, but they are all, ultimately, to the profit of men. I have commented elsewhere on the increasing social conservatism and restrictions on women's activities seen from the ninth century onwards in Christian literary texts, possibly in reaction to the increasing dominance of Islam and the declining Christian population in Egypt (Wilfong 2002b: 154–5), and a full gendered reading of the Teshlot papyri will likely show these documents to relate to this trend. Interactions between the related and non-related men in the documents also show interesting patterns that could be examined from the point of view of gendered relations between men.[26]

Of course, there are literally many thousands of Arabic papyri from Egypt in this period, of which hundreds relate to the Christian population of Egypt and which can preserve gendered traditions and trends from earlier Byzantine Egypt. This is a much larger topic than can be covered here, but note by way of example the pair of Christian Arabic marriage contracts edited by Nabia Abbott (1941), herself a pioneer in the study of women in early Islam, that would repay further gendered readings.

Given the wider geographical remit of Byzantine studies, it could also be significant to see how the understandings of gender in Egypt may have had an impact outside its boundaries. Nubia would be a prime possibility. There is a substantial body of documentary material in the Old Nubian language from Qasr Ibrim, including two extensive deposits of documents of the twelfth century[27] relevant to the study of gender. Superficially, the documents resemble similar types in Coptic from Byzantine Egypt; the property

[25] What follows is based on the recent re-edition of nine of these documents by T. S. Richter (2000), which greatly improves understanding of these texts.

[26] One document (F 1964.4/12) contains a letter in Arabic and a response in Coptic; the Arabic letter identifies its male writer as 'friend' of the recipient, but the Coptic reply has no corresponding identification, perhaps a reflection of the ambivalence of the concept of 'friendship' found in Coptic sources as described above.

[27] Archives 3 and 4, as described in Adams 1996, which provides a thorough survey of the documents and their contexts. Although some of these texts remain unpublished, the better preserved Old Nubian documents have been published by G. M. Browne (1989, 1991), to whom we owe a tremendous debt for his efforts on these difficult texts.

sales, divisions, releases, and donations would have been understandable, apart from the language difference, at Bawit or Jeme. The letters too reflect similar formulae and concerns to those found in Coptic documents. The Qasr Ibrim Old Nubian documents give us a rich field for gendered analysis: women are, in some cases, as actively involved as men in transactions to do with real estate and property, and there seem to be interesting patterns in the gendered transmission of property as well. Though hardly a statistically significant sample, these archives are extensive enough to allow us to see possible trends in gender issues for comparison to Byzantine Egypt. The situation of twelfth-century Qasr Ibrim, directly influenced by Egypt in its past, still connected to Egypt but now also receiving input from the Islamic world and Africa further south, makes these documents especially interesting for what they could say about the impact of Byzantine Egyptian understandings of gender roles and relations, and also how other African traditions may be reflected in Nubia.

Finally, I would like to bring this discussion of gender in Byzantine Egypt back to my own work, specifically my 2002 book *Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt*. This book considered the lives of women in a seventh- and eighth-century community in western Thebes, largely attested through Coptic documents, archaeological evidence, and literary texts.[28] Rather than recapitulate its findings and conclusions here, I would instead propose some rereadings of this material to show the potential of some of the areas for research discussed above. In part, these rereadings stem from my own subsequent thoughts on the project, in part from the goal of the original project to carry out a more broadly gendered reading of the Jeme material. So I would like to explore here two alternative approaches that could widen the scope of the project.

The first would simply be a turnabout called 'Men of Jeme'. This project could be an almost ironic study, bringing out the category of 'men' through the lives of individual men as I did for women in the actual book. In some ways, though, this would be harder: men's lives were taken for granted in fundamental ways by the scholars who made this evidence available, so that it can be surprisingly difficult to address men as special cases. But the basic structure of the project could be adapted easily from *Women of Jeme*: a set-up of the 'theory' and ideals of men, masculinity, and maleness in the Jeme material as articulated by the religious authors of the time, followed by a series of case studies to examine different aspects of men's lives. The cases themselves could be taken from the same groups of sources used in

[28] Note also the subsequent publication of technical notes on this material in Wilfong 2003.

Women of Jeme: male relatives of the individual women could be used as entry points into the same wider topics.

But what a difference this shift in focus would make. The individual women were prominent in part for their relative uniqueness, either in terms of extensiveness of documentation or in terms of being visible women from a group of otherwise mostly unrecorded, invisible women. Their male counterparts may be more numerous, but have much less to distinguish themselves. Scribes and witnesses of the Jeme tax receipts, for example, are exclusively male and thus give us something gendered to think about, but these documents give us little more than lists and amounts;[29] gender is clearly a prerequisite for involvement, but other factors (status, class, perhaps even ethnicity) determine which men were scribes and witnesses. Looking at the last chapter of the book, which begins with the case of a woman moneylender named Koloje, one sees men (most notably Koloje's son Pecosh and grandson Manasse) who exercised similar functions in the town economy. But these men's activities are much more poorly documented; it is, ironically, hard to reconstruct much about them without reference to Koloje herself. The men of Jeme seem to have fewer direct connections to the surviving material culture in the archaeological context of the town: the domestic remains of much of Jeme more often record the complex concerns of women in the town, rather than those of its men.

Of course, part of this difficulty in getting at the men of Jeme is due to the presentation of the evidence by its original interpreters – when the Jeme material was being published in the first half of the twentieth century, women were seen as exceptional cases in need of explanation, men as more normative and requiring no special problematization. But one wonders to what extent this is also true of the ancient evidence itself: although women played highly visible and active roles in the economic, social, and spiritual life of Jeme, it was still a community, and a world, largely run by men, and the evidence, especially the textual sources, may well reflect such an assumption of normativity for men.

Another rereading of the *Women of Jeme* material could be a more fully gendered consideration that we might call simply 'People of Jeme'. Again, one could follow the basic structure of the book, and the existing earlier sections that attempted to come to terms with constructions of gender in the Jeme material provide a good start. Also again, one could adopt the case studies and chapter divisions more or less wholesale. It would be in

[29] See Wilfong 2004 for such texts.

the interpretation of the case studies and their use for looking at wider areas of concern for gender that the work would require completely new approaches. It would no longer be enough to identify women and draw general conclusions from specific cases. This endeavour would require analysis involving a number of the theoretical and conceptual approaches outlined earlier to arrive at a more basic understanding of the constructions of gender, the functioning of gendered roles and relationships in the society of Jeme and its environs that would be the heart of this putative rereading of the Jeme corpus. Given the richness of the textual and archaeological sources to work with, it could be a fascinating study.

It will be evident that I have only begun to address the complexities of the topic of this paper and that I have glossed over whole bodies of evidence and approaches. To some extent, these omissions reflect the biases of my own background as an Egyptologist and Copticist. There is certainly much more in the way of relevant Greek-language papyrological material, and future work will want to look at relevant evidence across languages, divisions that are to some extent more artefacts of modern academic practice than ancient realities. Although I have expressed great enthusiasm about the uses of archaeological evidence, I am all too aware that my own work in archaeology has been largely museum-based and archival. A field archaeologist interested in gender would doubtless have proposed a very different programme for research. Such a personal focusing of the subject is probably inevitable and is easily remedied by similarly specific contributions by others. Gender can in any case be significant for all who work on Byzantine Egypt, not just those who have specialized in this topic. The contributors to the present volume form a good example: nearly all have done work in some way relevant to the study of gender in Byzantine Egypt, but few would probably describe themselves as scholars of gender. Like the other important social axes of our studies – status or class, race or ethnicity, age, to name a few – these subjects do not have to be ends in themselves. But by taking account of them, and the wider scholarship and methodologies for studying them, researchers can give their work wider scope and ultimately come closer to a fuller understanding of Byzantine Egypt as a whole.

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PART III

Christianity: The church and monasticism

CHAPTER 16

The institutional church

Ewa Wipszycka

The fourth century, especially its first half, saw the maturing of church institutions in Egypt. Yet in order to characterize the Egyptian church properly it is necessary to go back about one hundred years. Only then will it be possible to understand two enormously important features that lasted well into medieval times and had a decisive influence on the activity of the church of Egypt in many areas. These two distinctive features were the enormous power of the bishop of Alexandria,[1] who was superior to all other bishops in the country to a degree unknown in the rest of the Byzantine world, and the absence of metropolitan bishops.

The position of the bishop of Alexandria relative to the bishops from the *chôra* was surely a consequence of the status of Alexandria itself in Egypt. A look at the history of Egyptian Christianity in the third century leads further to the conclusion that the specific development of church institutions was responsible for this state of affairs. Unlike elsewhere around the Mediterranean, in Egypt the institution of the monarchic episcopate was not introduced and did not become common until the mid-third century (that is, about a hundred years later than in Italy, for example). The monarchic episcopate, which elsewhere around the Mediterranean spread during the second half of the second century, did not take root in Egypt until much later. In the opinion of modern historians, the first bishop of the monarchic kind in Alexandria was Demetrius (189–231). We do not know at what moment of his very long bishopric he managed to gain such power; he certainly did not do so from the start. He ordained the first three bishops in the Egyptian *chôra*. Heraklas (231–47), Demetrius'

[1] Some preliminary remarks of a terminological character are necessary. All bishops of Byzantine Egypt, including the patriarch of Alexandria, were styled *episkopoi*; the terms *archiepiskopos*, *patriarchês*, and *papa* were just honorific titles and were used irregularly, even with respect to one and the same person. However, for practical convenience I shall often call the bishop of Alexandria 'the patriarch'. For the same reason I shall use the term 'diocese' according to its modern (and medieval) meaning, although *dioikêsis* in Byzantine times belonged to the vocabulary of state administration.

successor, was able to consecrate twenty; by around the year 324 there were fifty-seven bishops.[2]

From the fact that there were no bishops in the Egyptian *chôra* until the time of Demetrius, the majority of twentieth-century historians have drawn the conclusion that Christian communities did not begin to arise there until the second quarter of the third century. This conclusion seems to me wrong. Biblical papyri and other texts connected with Christians that were found at different places in the Egyptian *chôra* and can be dated to the first half of the third century are numerous enough to rule out the possibility that they came to the *chôra* from Alexandria for some accidental reasons.[3] As regards the second century, it is more difficult to formulate any reasonably likely statement about the presence of Christians in the *chôra*, since Biblical papyri, the only evidence we have, cannot be dated with sufficient precision: dates proposed by specialists differ considerably.

The Christian communities of the Egyptian *chôra* in the latter half of the second and the first half of the third century governed themselves according to a very archaic model: the cult and organizational functions (charity in particular) belonged to the council of presbyters. We have no information as to how those councils were made up, whether through election or co-optation. Consecration of a new presbyter was certainly done by all the presbyters of the community. Christian communities of the *chôra* were to resist the monarchic bishop model for a long time.

The fact that the monarchic episcopate was imposed onto the *chôra* by Alexandria against the will of the majority of the clergy accounts for the emergence of the custom according to which all the bishops of Egypt north of the first cataract had to be ordained by the patriarch himself. This custom has no analogy in any other country at the time. The same fact can explain why there were no metropolitan bishops in Byzantine Egypt: the bishop of Alexandria simply preferred dealing with seventy-odd weak bishops, whom he picked himself, rather than with a handful of powerful metropolitans. The influence of the latter on the make-up of the Egyptian episcopate would have been significant.

[2] As reported in a chronicle written by Eutychios, the Melkite patriarch of Alexandria in the years 877–940, admittedly a late source, but on many issues fairly reliable; Cheikho et al. 1908–9: 9.4–5. Cf. also Breydy, in the same series. A detailed discussion of the monarchic episcopate in Egypt is to be found in my article now in press: 'The Beginnings of the Monarchic Episcopate in Egypt'.

[3] Lists of Biblical papyri are to be found in Aland 1976 and in van Haelst 1976. They have been systematically updated in the *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* by K. Treu (1969–91) and C. Römer (since 1997). In M. Naldini's corpus of Christian letters, Naldini 1998, the letters of the second and of the beginning of the third century are published under nos. 1–5.

The network of bishoprics coincided as a rule with administrative divisions. The bishops usually resided in localities with civic status. However, the patriarch could, for different reasons, create episcopal sees in localities that did not have such status, mostly in the feebly urbanized frontier areas on both sides of the Delta. In 325 (when the council of Nicaea was held) there were in Egypt (including the Thebaid) fifty bishoprics, and in the two Libyan provinces ten. At the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century there were in Egypt seventy-five bishoprics, and in Libya twenty-three.[4]

The rapid increase in the number of the faithful outside the cities where bishops resided led to a major institutional innovation in the church in the middle of the fourth century, the establishment of autonomous churches, termed *katholikai ekklêsiai* with the name of the locality added, where masses were celebrated regularly. These resembled the parish churches of a later period. The bishops appointed separate staffs of clergy for these churches. The increasingly dense network of *katholikai ekklêsiai* was a typically Egyptian phenomenon; in other countries of Christendom, bishoprics tended to multiply and bishops of lower rank, *chôrepiskopoi* or *periodeutai*, were appointed. The *katholikai ekklêsiai* were modelled on the autonomous churches which evidence shows were functioning in the neighbourhood of Alexandria in the early fourth century. *Katholikai ekklêsiai* were seldom encountered in episcopal cities outside Alexandria, the bishops preferring personal direct management of the churches to an extended independence of presbyters assigned to head particular churches.

One other phenomenon, the beginnings of which fall in the fourth century, although it was to take on importance only with the passage of time, is the mushrooming of churches (in the sense of buildings) in towns as well as in villages. Papyri reveal that even in small villages (not to mention large villages or towns) their number could exceed ten. We should not be misled into thinking that the number of churches and chapels of a place corresponded to the needs of the given community; they were mainly the products of religious ostentation. Pious individuals or families would readily erect a church. Churches could arise anywhere: at the peripheries of a town or village, or in the desert terrain neighbouring the cultivated zone. Their construction would not necessarily involve any great expense: most of them were small buildings constructed with sun-dried bricks. The liturgical furnishing (vases, crosses, etc.) could be more expensive. Bishops were far from enthusiastic about these activities. It often happened that

[4] Based on the research of Martin 1996: 17–114.

the families of the founders could not afford the expense of running such churches, and in this case the expense had to be covered by the bishop within the diocese's budget. Desacralizing the churches was forbidden by the law (although reality tended to be different). Cult in these churches was frequently irregular, masses being celebrated only on the days of the holy patrons or when ordered by the bishop.

Bishops played a fundamental role in the life of Christian communities, in Egypt as elsewhere, throughout the early Byzantine period.[5] Paradoxically, the absence of any intermediary between the patriarch and the bishops increased to a certain extent the area of autonomous activity of the bishops. The patriarch could not interfere with all the day-to-day local business of the dioceses. Had there been metropolitan bishops, each of them, having power over a small number of bishops, would have been in a position to exert a more effective control.

It was the bishop's task to organize worship in the broadest sense. Even when the development of the *katholikai ekklêsiai* network allowed most of the faithful to take part in masses celebrated by presbyters in the villages and not by bishops in the cities, the bishops continued to be responsible for baptism. One might object that archaeological finds reveal a large number of baptismal basins in village or monastery churches. But these can be explained by the evidence of a document from bishop Abraham's archive: a contract between the clergy of the village of Jeme and bishop Abraham states that the bishop shall come to Jeme three times a year in order to baptize.[6] We are thus permitted the supposition that basins discovered by archaeologists outside the cities (in villages or monasteries) were used not so much by the local clergy as by the bishop whenever he visited the place.

In practice, bishops also ensured that the faithful were instructed in the basics of doctrinal knowledge through regular preaching. Presbyters could

[5] Our knowledge of the duties and activities of the bishops in Egypt draws from numerous documents in Greek and Coptic (see Schmelz 2002), and primarily two collections of canons, both from the fourth century: Riedel and Crum 1904; Coquin 1966.

[6] P.Berl.Inv. 12501, included by M. Krause in his unpublished book, which is a good study of the archives of Abraham: Krause 1956: 147–50. The archive of Abraham, the bishop of Hermonthis, is among the most important collections of texts providing information on the institutional church in Byzantine Egypt. First a simple monk, later the prior of the Monastery of St Phoibammon (situated in the Hatshepsut Temple in Deir el-Bahri), Abraham was made bishop of Hermonthis by the monophysite patriarch Damianus (569–605), and performed his episcopal duties without leaving his monastery. Archaeologists found in the ruins of this monastery the archive of his episcopal chancellery, comprising several hundred documents (only a part has been published) written on tablets of limestone, which make a handy and inexpensive writing material. They are mostly copies of circulars addressed to the clergy or the faithful, of nominations of members of the clergy, of letters to and from the bishop.

replace the bishop in this task, but it is more than likely that most of them were not educated sufficiently to enable them to preach.

Consecrating members of the clergy was the exclusive prerogative of the bishop. More exactly, it was the prerogative of the bishop of the diocese where the candidate was to discharge his duties. Transgression of this rule automatically led to charges of simony. In the Byzantine period, to be ordained a presbyter or deacon was only to be ordained as a member of the clergy of a particular diocese; it was never an absolute ordination. Should one wish to move elsewhere, one could keep one's ecclesiastical condition subject to acceptance by the clergy in the new place of residence.

The bishop exercised minute control over the moral behaviour of his flock, particularly in the sexual domain. This is apparent from the correspondence found in the archives of Abraham and Pisentius. The local clergy was obliged to pass information on these matters to the bishop.

The bishop was in charge of managing the entire church property.[7] This consisted of land, houses, workshops, offerings of food and money brought regularly by the faithful during the mass, occasional donations as well as donations made on the deathbed (*prosphora*) with the intention of earning merit in the Heavenly Court. In Byzantine Egypt, the church as a whole was the biggest landowner, although its property was made up mostly of small, randomly dispersed plots of land. Land administration was a relatively easy business, as it sufficed to lease the land to cultivators. Houses and workshops were more difficult, as they required regular maintenance and renovation. As a matter of principle, the bishop was not permitted to sell real property belonging to the church. The prohibition recurs more than once in imperial constitutions and in the normative texts. It had the aim of securing property against dishonest or inexperienced bishops, but it made it impossible to manage it in a rational way.

The system of managing church property was quite complicated. The bishop was entitled to control the entire revenue of all the churches and monastic communities, but he did so seldom, if at all. Such action would have been highly unpopular. As a rule, donations of considerable value (especially land and buildings) remained in the control of the clergy of the church that had received them. In any case, the bishop participated in the revenue of all of his churches, as they were required to pay him a share of what they had received from the faithful. Part of these contributions was in turn transferred by the bishops of the *chôra* to the patriarch. At the bishop's side, there always stood a steward, or *oikonomos* (called 'the great *oikonomos*'

[7] For the economic aspects of church operations in Egypt, see Wipszycka 1972.

or 'the catholic *oikonomos*' to mark the difference from the *oikonomos* of non-episcopal churches and of monasteries). The Council of Chalcedon (canon 26) made it obligatory for the bishop to nominate a steward and to choose him from among the local clergy. In the Egyptian church, the office of steward had been in existence well before AD 451; without the aid of the *oikonomos* the bishops would not have been in a position to deal with the management of the extensive church property.

What the bishop received from the churches and monasteries was returned to them in part. The bishop was under an obligation to help poor churches, if they could not procure the bread and wine for celebrating mass or the oil for keeping the lamps alight. The very same monasteries which handed over to the bishop part of their incomes would receive gifts whenever he came to visit them with due ceremony; failing to observe this custom would have been considered a sign of avarice, potentially imperilling the bishop's prestige. A parallel custom required the patriarch to donate gifts to bishops. The church thus complied with the same principle of gifts and counter-gifts known to apply in relationships between the emperor and members of the imperial court elite.

Charitable functions in the diocese were exercised mainly by the bishop. This was natural, since the income of the church was concentrated in his hands. It is true that the parish and other non-episcopal churches sometimes received from the faithful a gift, mostly as a *prosphora*. However, such gifts would have to be redistributed very quickly to serve their purpose, for it was believed that the soul had to appear before the Heavenly Court on the fortieth day after death and that whatever amounts were given to the poor thereafter would in no way influence the judgment in its favour. The churches therefore served in this matter only as intermediaries and the amounts received could not feed their finances.[8]

The involvement of the bishop in charity activities corresponded to the model of the ideal shepherd of the community: the bishop's main obligation was in taking care of the poor and the ill. This principle found a particularly clear formulation in a very interesting Coptic literary piece composed in the 'questions and answers' genre *(erôtoapokriseis)* in the sixth or seventh century. Two members of the clergy ask the patriarch Cyril what the most important virtue of the bishop is: the gift of prophetic visions or something else. Cyril is in no doubt: the gift of prophetic visions is of lesser use to the bishop than 'giving to the poor and needy'.[9] Ascribing these words to Cyril belongs obviously to literary fiction, but this does not make them any less

[8] Wipszycka 1998. [9] Crum 1915: 28 (Coptic text), 61–2 (translation).

significant. What is important is that the clergy (probably the Alexandrian clergy) saw charity as the bishop's principal task. Not everyone shared this view, no doubt. The average man would simply hope that a charismatic bishop would persuade God to grant a good harvest.

Whenever a bishop died, the local clergy, the notables, the people, and probably also the bishops of the neighbouring dioceses would decide on the choice of a candidate or, if unanimity was not forthcoming, of more than one candidate. Delegates would then set out for Alexandria in order to present the candidature(s) to the patriarch, who, however, was not bound in any way and could consecrate somebody else, even a man having nothing to do with the diocese in question. His choice could fall upon a man he knew personally or a man recommended to him by members of his curia. Obviously, this practice opened the gates of nepotism and simony.

Literary sources concerning the Egyptian *chôra* give the impression that in the period under discussion bishops were normally recruited from among the monks. In this respect, however, caution is advised, considering that the stories told in the literary sources concern exceptional individuals, bishops who were saints, not average men. The notables and the local clergy might have been interested in recommending to the patriarch for episcopal consecration a man endowed with administrative talent, and above all an influential man. Such was the importance of the bishop in local affairs that it would have been a pity not to propose as candidates people well situated in the local or provincial elite. Among people endowed with practical abilities there surely must have been some very pious individuals: it would be absurd to think that only monks were deeply religious.

It is impossible to determine with certitude which social groups the bishops tended to come from, for relevant data in our sources are sporadic. We can just say that representatives of well-to-do classes should have been in the majority, for the bishop was expected to have enough education to preach sermons and to represent the church worthily before the state authorities. Did this change when the practice of recruiting candidates from the monastic milieu began to prevail? Our sources mention a number of charismatic monks who were consecrated bishops, but they do not say anything about their social origin. However, in the monastic communities men coming from well-off families were certainly numerous. Therefore it is not unlikely that monks of humble origin elevated to the episcopal dignity were exceptions.

Our sources never mention a bishop coming from any of Egypt's most powerful families (big landlords or higher state functionaries). It is true that the *argumentum ex silentio* is often deceptive, but in this case it can be

taken seriously, for the amount of evidence on the church and the monastic milieu is enormous.

Upon election, a bishop usually left his monastery. We have only one piece of early testimony suggesting a different scenario: Aphou, bishop of Oxyrhynchos at the end of the fourth century, divided his week between the desert and the episcopal seat. Arriving at Oxyrhynchos on Saturday morning, he would convene the people in the church, pray with them, and say mass at night; then, on Sunday morning, he would say mass again; during both celebrations he would preach (let us note the importance of sermons as an element of the mass). Aphou had nominated a steward (*oikonomos*); once a year he checked the church accounts; he divided the church income and the gifts received from the faithful amid the poor of the town and the vicinity. He would listen to litigants and arbitrate. On Sunday evening Aphou would leave Oxyrhynchos.[10]

The bishop was the superior of all the members of the clergy; after all, it was he who appointed them. They constituted a numerous group, one that increased as time went by in simple reflection of the growing number of churches. Candidates for church appointments were equally numerous, driven by piety as much as by ambition to play a leading role in their communities and the desire to take advantage of various, chiefly fiscal, privileges. The clergy represented a hierarchical structure with presbyters at the top of the ladder, followed by deacons, subdeacons, lectors, and chanters. The status of the doorkeeper was not clearly defined, and neither was that of the grave-digger, not always included among the clergy. Deaconesses were not known in Egypt, and in the fourth century widows were still regarded as a group on the verge of priesthood; later (although we do not know when exactly) they disappeared as an active group in the church, remaining solely as the object of special care. Members of confraternities (*philoponoi, spoudaioi*) assisted the bishop but were not counted among the clergy.

Forming a separate group were priests cooperating with the bishop on an everyday basis. Representatives of all ranks were to be found in this group. Their number was dependent on the size of the diocese and its affluence. Part of the remaining clergy had permanent ties with the big churches, chiefly the *katholikai ekklêsiai*.[11] Predominant in this group were the presbyters and deacons, although lectors also occurred. When presbyters

[10] Rossi 1887–92: 1.5–22 (43).

[11] Contrary to what we would expect from our knowledge of modern ecclesiastical organization, in Byzantine Egypt the archpresbyter of a parish church was the superior of the clergy in his church only. The smaller churches were subordinate to the bishop, not to the local parish.

and deacons were, for reasons of old age or ignorance, unable to read the Bible and church announcements, a lector on the spot was essential.

While the episcopal priests devoted themselves largely to the service of the church and received sufficient (if not substantial) upkeep, the other groups held a limited share in church funds (mainly in the form of a part in the offerings made by the faithful during mass). They lived mainly off revenue generated from the economic activities that had been their domain before their ordination: agriculture, handicrafts, offices in the state administration, and the administration of large landed estates. Unlike the bishop, the members of the clergy remained at home and practically never left their families.[12]

A separate group of the clergy consisted of monks who were presbyters or deacons. Some of them had entered a monastery after taking holy orders, others had received the orders in the course of their monastic existence as ascetics distinguished by their piety and holding a dominant position in their monastic communities. The attitude of monks towards ordination varied from rejection to longing. The former of the two was justified in religious terms: as noted in the *Apophthegmata*, 'consecration is for the perfect', and in rejecting it monks sat in severe judgment of themselves. The second attitude reflected a desire to hold a leading position in the community. Ascetics frequently succumbed to these contradictory emotions.[13] Monk-priests exercised their pastoral duties in their monasteries and lauras. Ordinary people among the Christians could take part in the worship held in the monasteries, which were rarely isolated from the surrounding people.

Apart from worship, the bishop had many tasks of a public character, which made him an important and well-known person. He was above all a privileged intermediary between the people of the diocese and the state authorities, both civil and military. Imperial constitutions gave him the right and the duty of looking to the maintenance of city walls, aqueducts, and public buildings (e.g., public baths). He was obliged periodically to visit prisons. Last but not least, he had a role to play in the collection of taxes.

It is worth mentioning one notable example. Preserved in a papyrus is a petition made by Appion, bishop of Syene, to Theodosius II.[14] The bishop requests the emperor to order the soldiers stationed in the area of Syene to protect the churches belonging to his see, which are being raided

[12] Wipszycka 1972: chapter six: 'Les occupations laïques du clergé'.

[13] Wipszycka 1996b: 135–66.

[14] *P.Leid. Z*, ed. by D. Feissel and K. Worp, *Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van oudheden te Leiden* 68 (1988) 97–111.

continuously by 'criminal barbarians' (Blemmyes, Nobadai, and others). The soldiers, says Appion, should 'obey me and be under my orders, in the same way as the soldiers stationed in the fort called Philae in your Upper Thebaid are in the service of the holy churches of God at Philae'. The phrases 'to be under the orders', 'to be in the service' are an exaggeration, which is not unnatural in the pompous language of this petition.

It is easy to get the impression that in the sixth and seventh centuries the bishop's role in the activities of the church had grown extensively, but it is difficult to substantiate this belief. The imperial constitutions included in Justinian's *Code* are our primary source on this subject, yet it should be remembered that these constitutions inform us foremost of what the imperial wishes were. They tell us much less about reality, Egyptian reality in particular.

Many years ago, when I began to study the history of church institutions in Egypt, I expected to find, among the very numerous papyri coming from episcopal chancelleries, many documents concerning the *episcopalis audientia*, which would enable us to go beyond what is known from imperial constitutions on the judicial activity of bishops. I was wrong. The evidence is very scarce. On the other hand, bishops (like presbyters and deacons) often acted as arbitrators in quarrels; more often still, they intervened in order to put an end to situations that were morally scandalous. They did so simply on the grounds of their religious authority; contrary to what many modern historians have thought, they need not have been entrusted with special official functions. The case of Pisentius, bishop of Koptos (569–632), of whom we know from an extensive dossier,[15] is instructive in this respect: it sufficed that he was the bishop of Koptos for him to be able to summon villagers guilty of immoral behaviour; he had the local clergy at his disposal to gather all relevant information. Abraham's and Pisentius' correspondence shows how they intervened, but it does not show the effects of their interventions. One might suppose, however, that a letter read aloud

[15] This is, apart from Abraham's archive, the other most important dossier in providing a wealth of information on the activities of bishops and the extent of their involvement. Pisentius was a monk in various monasteries and ended his life in one of the monasteries near Deir el-Bahri, where his archive was found. The letters (written on papyrus) composing the archive were published, not very well, at the beginning of the twentieth century by E. Revillout, in *Revue Égyptologique* (1900, 1902, 1914); Jacques van der Vliet is now preparing a new edition of them. They are mostly letters exchanged between members of the clergy of the Koptos diocese and the bishop; a large portion of them concerns cases of misbehaviour among the villagers. Beside the letters, we are in possession of a biography of Pisentius in two Coptic versions (Sahidic and Bohairic) and in an Arabic version (better than the Coptic ones), published in *Patrologia Orientalis* 22 (1930) by De Lacy O'Leary. Comparison of the letters and the biography is instructive. For the history of Pisentius and his dossier, see van der Vliet 2002.

before the assembled faithful, in which the bishop condemned a person who inflicted suffering on others, was bound to have a considerable impact on the culprit's standing with the local community.

The bishop's authority extended over monastic communities of all kinds. We may, however, wonder how effective his control was. The evidence we have points in divergent directions. I should think, indeed, that relationships between the bishop and monastic communities varied, depending on many factors: time, the personality of the bishop, and local traditions. The bishop does not seem to have had much to say over who was to lead the monastic communities. Monks would decide on this by polling or the prior would name his successor on his deathbed. Texts speaking of the transfer of powers inside a monastic community never mention the bishop's assent. Certainly, it is likely that monks sought the bishop's advice on the possible candidates, for it would have been unwise to put at the head of the community somebody disliked by the bishop. If monks quarrelled in a scandalous way, the bishop would of course intervene as a judge; but as long as a monastic community lived in concord, the bishop had no reason to intervene in its everyday life.

However, there is in two texts evidence suggesting that the bishop might at times nominate a supervisor of the monks of his diocese. The first case of this kind can be found in the dossier of Pachomius.[16] We are told that the bishop of Tentyra wanted to put Pachomius 'at the head of the monks of the diocese', but that Pachomius turned down this proposition. I doubt the truth of this piece of information: it is difficult to believe that the monks of the first half of the fourth century, who still formed a very unstable milieu, would have accepted submission to any control whatsoever. The story proves, instead, that at the time when it was written, towards the end of the fourth or at the beginning of the fifth century, a bishop's control over the monastic communities of his diocese was not unthinkable. In much later times, according to the *History of Patriarchs of Alexandria*, the patriarch Simon I (689–701) entrusted John, bishop of Nikiou (the author of the well-known chronicle), with 'the management of the affairs of monasteries'.[17] The text does not indicate the territorial scope of the control John was entrusted with. It certainly did not extend over all the *chôra*, for this would have been practically impossible.

The Christian communities of Byzantine Egypt comprised people who spoke Egyptian (Coptic) and Greek; other groups were insignificant. This

[16] *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, ed. F. Halkin (Brussels 1932), *Vita Prima* 30; *Les vies coptes de s. Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs* (Leuven 1943) Bo 28.

[17] *PO* 5: 32–3.

fact was bound to produce difficulties in the activities of the church, and particularly in preaching and teaching. Obviously there were in the churches of Egypt people who were bilingual (this was an important group in every domain of Egyptian life), as well as Hellenophones who spoke a little Coptic, and Coptophones who spoke a little Greek. Nevertheless, there also were Christians (we do not know how many) who would not understand one another across the linguistic barrier.

From the fifth century on, the sees were held indifferently by members of both linguistic groups. Among the clergy of lower ranks there certainly were Coptic-speaking people already in the fourth century. It is natural to imagine that the linguistic problems resulting from this were coped with by means of interpreters. As far as I know, there is in our evidence just one mention of interpreters used by the church. It occurs in an *euchologion* (a collection of liturgical prayers) traditionally ascribed to Serapion of Thmouis, a pupil of Saint Antony the Hermit and a man linked to Athanasius.[18] A prayer for the bishop and the church (chapter 25) enumerates hierarchically the bishop, the presbyters, the deacons, the subdeacons, the lectors, and the interpreters. Admittedly, a single reference cannot prove that the bishops often resorted to interpreters; however, the hypothesis seems to me justified. The almost complete silence of the texts can be explained. All we need is to assume that most of the interpreters used by the church were not of clerical status (as in the case attested by the *euchologion*), but belonged to the auxiliary personnel or were chosen ad hoc from the faithful present; if we admit this, we can see that the authors of our texts had no reason to mention the interpreters.

Modern historians have a poor opinion of the theological learning and, more generally, of the cultural level of the clergy of the Egyptian *chôra*. The opinion is certainly exaggerated, especially if applied to the bishops. Indeed, the culture of Byzantine Egypt is often underestimated to an unacceptable degree. There is sufficient evidence to prove that Egyptian towns of medium size were home to many elite families who spoke Greek and took care to furnish their children with proper schooling, as education was a prerequisite of a successful career in the state administration. Besides literature in Greek, there was a Coptic literature, which comprised not only translations, but also original works. It is highly improbable that, in a country where the level of literacy was not declining, the episcopal dignity should have been conferred on men illiterate or devoid of any theological knowledge. The average culture of the clergy of lower ranks obviously was

[18] *The Prayers of Serapion of Thmuis*, ed. M. E. Johnson (Rome 1995).

not as high as that of the bishops, though we should refrain from pronouncing any sweeping statements. One thing is certain: since there was no specific schooling preparing for the fulfillment of ecclesiastic functions of any degree, individual members of the clergy could develop their mental equipment only if they had acquired the necessary foundations before entering the clergy.

In the process of forming its institutions, the church imitated both the state administration and that of the large estates. It took over from them the habit of putting all sorts of matters in writing. The chancellery of the bishop produced Greek and Coptic documents accompanying and documenting the various activities of the church. When the bishop ordained presbyters or deacons, they gave him written declarations by which they pledged themselves not to leave their diocese, to take care of the church which had been entrusted to them, to fast on the prescribed days, to learn by heart some Biblical texts (the Gospels, Paul's Epistles, the Psalms), and so on. In some cases the newly ordained presbyters or deacons handed to the bishop written declarations signed by local notables who vouched for their future good behaviour. When charging one of his subordinates with visiting a church, the bishop gave him a warrant. Examples could be easily multiplied. The earliest piece of evidence we have concerning the ecclesiastical habit of committing all sorts of things to writing is the papyrus *CPR* V 11 of the beginning of the fourth century: here a newly ordained deacon binds himself not to leave the bishop. (Analogous documents known to us are much later, in the archive of bishop Abraham, from the beginning of the seventh century.)[19]

Functioning in this way, church institutions both implied and favoured literacy among the clergy. Admittedly there were illiterate men among them, but they were doubtless a minority and did not advance in the hierarchy.

The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) ushered in a long period of crisis and schism in Alexandria: at times there were there two patriarchs and two patriarchal curiae. The bishops of the *chôra*, however, remained at first outside of the division. They might individually have had their own theological preferences and chosen people according to such preferences, but for a long time there did not exist two distinct, parallel church structures in the Egyptian *chôra*, as had been the case for instance in Africa in the time of St Augustine. It was not until the latter part of his reign that Justinian lost hope of ever reconciling the two parties. Then the imperial administration in Egypt began to persecute systematically the bishops of monophysite

[19] Wipszycka 1996a: 177–94.

tendency and to replace them with pro-Chalcedonian ones. The same policy was followed by Justinian's successors. Some of the monophysite bishops, being advanced in years, were allowed to keep their sees, but after their death the sees were given to men representing the official line.

The persecutions led in the end to the rise of a monophysite church, parallel to the pro-Chalcedonian church. The unity of the church still existed in the time of the patriarch Theodosius (535–66), but it had been destroyed by the time of Peter IV (576–8). This can be gathered from the fact that Peter IV, who was elected after years of unrest, ordained seventy bishops, which means that in a very short space of time he appointed bishops for nearly all the dioceses of Egypt. The sees, however, were certainly not vacant (it is impossible to imagine that Egypt had been for some time without any bishops). The bishops nominated by Peter IV had to coexist with bishops already in place. It is true that there is reason to doubt whether all of the newly ordained bishops were able to take up their office: we may assume that for different reasons, especially because of difficulties created by the state authorities, some of them were obliged to remain in the monasteries of the Alexandrian area or in the monastic centres of the western Delta.[20]

The rapidity of the growth of a monophysite hierarchy parallel to the pro-Chalcedonian one proves that monophysites were coming to believe that the rites of the pro-Chalcedonian church were not valid. People persuaded themselves that they were living without baptism and the Eucharist, and therefore going towards inevitable eternal damnation.

We cannot guess how the two churches (two bishops and two clergy groups) functioned in the towns of the *chôra*. As regards Alexandria, it is clear that they ignored one another, which was all the easier as the monophysite patriarch and his clergy resided in the monasteries just outside of Alexandria. We do not know whether the same behaviour was possible for the bishops in the *chôra*. Papyrus documents or inscriptions do not help us in this respect, as they mention bishops without specifying on which side of the doctrinal division the given bishop was. (Only narrative sources give such information.)

It is important to mention two exceptions to this information void: Pisentius and Abraham, both certainly monophysite. We know that after being ordained they remained in their respective monasteries. Taken in itself, this fact is not extraordinary: let us remember Aphou, the commuting

[20] Frend 1972.

bishop of Oxyrhynchos in the late fourth century mentioned earlier. That is why modern scholars studying the history of Christianity in Egypt never suspected that Pisentius' and Abraham's reason for not leaving their monasteries could be other than their preference for living in the desert. However, rereading Pisentius' biography and the documents of both archives, one notices a striking fact: there is nothing there on problems concerning the episcopal church of Koptos or of Hermonthis. Pisentius and Abraham intervene in ecclesiastic problems concerning small or big villages (Abraham closely cooperates with the clergy of Jeme), but the clergy of the episcopal church never appears. In particular, we never see the 'great *oikonomos*', of whose importance in the management of ecclesiastic finances and property we know. Pisentius and Abraham interact with the civil authorities of the places near their monasteries, but the authorities of Koptos and Hermonthis are never mentioned. There is no allusion to administrative or fiscal tasks, while we know that such tasks belonged to the bishop's duties.

One might object that the fact that Pisentius' biography does not contain information on what its hero did when he was not in his monastery is not significant, for the horizon of its author is strictly monastic. However, the letters found in Pisentius' and Abraham's archives were certainly not written nor selected according to literary patterns proper to the lives of the saints. Therefore the absence of any trace in them of relationships between Pisentius or Abraham and the centres of their dioceses is significant. It might well be, I think, that at the time of Abraham and Pisentius the dioceses of Hermonthis and Koptos had two bishops each, a monophysite one and a pro-Chalcedonian one, and that the pro-Chalcedonian bishop acted in the town and left the villages or some of the villages and the monasteries of the desert fringes to the monophysite bishop. This would mean that the local state authorities did not conform to the emperor's policy of persecution of heretics but accepted a compromise that enabled both parties to act freely inside two tacitly delimited zones.

What happened with the money that bishops sent to Alexandria, if there were there two patriarchs of opposed dogmatic standing? The sources are silent in this respect. We can only speculate. I should suppose that state authorities – at least when they decided on a harsh anti-monophysite policy – would see to it that the tribute was paid to the pro-Chalcedonian bishop. Controlling this would not have been technically difficult. Adopting such a hypothesis might account for the provenance of the large amounts of money available to John the Almsgiver, the Chalcedonian patriarch in the years 609–19: he was the chief of the minority church, but had at his

disposal the money coming from the whole of Egypt, from monophysites and pro-Chalcedonians alike.[21]

The first generation of Egyptian ecclesiastics acting under Arab rule had little to complain about. The church was allowed to keep its property, and the Arab administration did not interfere with internal ecclesiastical affairs. In the new situation the clergy was the only representative of the local population. There was, however, a serious complication, deriving from the doctrinal division: monophysites and pro-Chalcedonians soon began to appeal to the Arab authorities in their conflicts, provoking fiscal vexations. The pro-Chalcedonians still had a considerable, if dwindling, influence. It is a mistake to think that they all left Egypt together with the imperial garrison.

Already in 689, when Simon I was elected, the monophysite church agreed to submit the election for the Arab authorities' approval. From then on the Arab authorities came to play a decisive role in the elections of the patriarchs of Alexandria.

At the beginning of the eighth century, wanting to increase the fiscal revenues from Egypt, the Arabs changed the system of calculating and collecting taxes. The clergy lost the possibility of influencing these operations in its own favour. It was not possible to protect churches and monasteries against the growth of taxes. Fiscal pressure and the harsh methods used by governors who were interested only in looting a country that was considered extremely rich provoked a number of local rebellions, which were bloodily repressed. Most of these rebellions broke out in the Delta, the first in 693, the second – the greatest – in 832 (in the marshy region of al-Bashmur, northern Delta).

For a long time the Arabs did not actively promote Islamization. The Ummayads (661–750) were even averse to it. The conquests of the seventh century did not aim at converting the infidels, but at extending domination and acquiring new sources of revenues. Among the Egyptian population the Arabs were a small group, isolated in every respect, living in military camps. They enjoyed a privileged status. This was reserved for them as Arabs: it was not accessible to those among the Copts who converted to Islam. In spite of all this, Islamization began to spread in Egypt early and gained speed with the passage of time. There were many reasons for it. In a country governed by Muslims, those who converted to Islam, though not getting access to institutionally established privileges, acquired a better standing as compared with that of the Coptic population. Conversion

[21] Wipszycka 2002.

was particularly advantageous for people having direct interaction with the Arabs. The Coptic rebellions increased the mistrust of the authorities towards all Christians, with the result that it became more and more difficult for Copts to get the better jobs in the state administration. The process of Arabization of the Coptic population (a process that already at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth century had gone so far that the Arabic language was made obligatory in the state administration) favoured Islamization by diminishing the cultural distance between the governing and the governed. The first generations of Copts converting to Islam opened the road to further, more massive conversions: those who converted were no longer punished by a complete isolation inside their communities.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The institutional church in Byzantine Egypt is not a frequently studied subject. Works concerning the Egyptian church are numerous, but most of them do not concentrate upon ecclesiastical institutions, but upon the 'histoire événementielle' or the theological controversies or the cult of the saints or monasticism, etc. Such studies as have been devoted to the aforesaid subject become quickly obsolete because of the considerable growth of the evidence. The works listed here are the most useful for the subjects treated here.

On the church of Egypt: Martin 1998: 59–70; Wipszycka 1996a and 1998: 71–80; L. Pietri 1998, Pietri and Pietri 1995; this is the most recent and ample handbook of church history; there is much about the church of Egypt. Much useful information on the history of Christianity in Egypt can also be found in *Coptic Encyclopedia*; and in the geographic lexicon by Timm 1982–92.

Bishops: Fedalto 1988; these lists are to be used together with the lists taking into account the evidence of papyri in Worp 1994; Martin 1996, although the chronological range is in fact wider than indicated by the title.

The church generally: Frend 1972; though many works have appeared since 1972, this is still the best research on the history of the church in the Greek East in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Papyrological evidence: Judge and Pickering 1977: 47–71.

Clergy: Schmelz 2002; the book comprises a great number of documents accompanied by translations, among other things some documents from the archive of bishop Abraham, taken from M. Krause's book of 1956;

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CHAPTER 17

The cult of saints: A haven of continuity in a changing world?[1]

Arietta Papaconstantinou

In the sixteenth century, Erasmus noted that 'several Countryes avouch to themselves their peculiar Saint, and as every one of them has his particular gift, so also his particular Form of Worship. As, one is good for the Tooth-ach; another, for Groaning women; a third, for Stolen Goods; a fourth, for making a Voyage Prosperous; and a fifth, to cure Sheep of the Rot; & so of the rest, for it would be too tedious to run over all . . . Yet what do they beg of these Saints but what belongs to *Folly*? To examine it a little: among all those offerings, which are so frequently hung up in Churches . . . did you ever see the least acknowledgment from any one, that had left his *Folly*, or grown a Hairs-breadth the wiser? One scapes a Shipwrack, and gets safe to Shore . . . Another, while the rest were fighting, ran out of the Field, no less luckily, than valiantly . . . Another recovered from his Fever in spite of his Physician . . . Another's Cart broke, and he sav'd his Horses; Another was preserv'd from the fall of a House . . . All these hang up their Tablets, but no one gives thanks for his recovery from Folly.'[2]

This vision of the cult of saints, which has antecedents among the church fathers, has persisted through the centuries to our own day. Irrespective of the moral implications of rigorist criticism, the description here given of the cult would be accepted as relevant by many an observer. Mostly called upon by 'the common people', a saint usually protects those who venerate him (or much more rarely her), and intervenes at key moments in their lives to save them from disease, death, or bereavement. The saint's gifts, often but not always bestowed during a visit to his shrine, are part of a complex system of exchange, with 'clients' returning the favour through material donations to the shrine, often votive offerings. So, one may ask, is there a point in engaging in a historical study of the social practices related to this phenomenon, if they show such continuity and are of so simple and

[1] I would like to thank Roger Bagnall and Lennart Sundelin for their comments and suggestions.

[2] Erasmus, *Moriae encomium, or The Praise of Folly*, translated by John Wilson (1668) 69–70.

direct interpretation? Is such work condemned to remain descriptive of the endless problems brought before the saints, and the no less numerous ways in which saints dealt with them?

These are of course rhetorical questions. We have all witnessed the recent deconstruction of the picture in which the credulous 'common people' continued with such age-old practices inherited from pagan religion while the educated elites saw the saints only as models of a pure Christian behaviour. Peter Brown has shown how wrong this assumption is in the case of the later Roman empire, and how deeply involved the elites were in the very practices they claimed to despise. He has also allowed us to distinguish between saints and holy men – the dead and the living – and prompted us to take a wider view of the social function of the cult, especially in its formative period.[3] So, beyond expressing 'what belongs to *Folly*', the cult of saints variously appears to have been an instrument of power relations and socio-economic strategies, both within the church and without it. It is this variety and its implications that justify study of these cults.

Having preserved a more complete set of sources than other provinces of the early Byzantine empire, Egypt offers a privileged vantage point for the study of the rise and development of the cult of saints. Information about the practices it involved has usually been extracted from miracle stories, bishops' sermons and homilies, pilgrims' accounts, or various kinds of archaeological evidence, such as the 'souvenirs' pilgrims brought back from their visits to saints' shrines, or the complex structures excavated at the sites of famous *martyria*.[4] Until recently, few studies had systematically used inscriptions, let alone papyri, even when focusing entirely on Egypt. At best, documentary sources had been used to illustrate specific points, such as the existence of churches of a given saint in cities of the Valley.[5] This neglect has to do with the very nature of documentary evidence, which is lacunose, erratic, laconic, and hardly given to commentary about the cult of saints. What can someone used to working on hagiographical and other narrative texts make of the mention in a list of taxpayers of a church of St Papnouthios? The only way to exploit such sources is by serial treatment, by collecting all the available evidence: only then can one hope to perceive the structures underlying the Egyptian cult of saints.

[3] The two classic studies are Brown 1971 (repr. in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (London 1982): 103–52) and Brown 1981.

[4] See Fernández Marcos 1975; Baumeister 1972; Kötting 1950; Maraval 1985; Frankfurter 1998b.

[5] So Davis 2001. Fowden 1999 focused on Rusafa/Sergiopolis; inscriptions are an essential part of the evidence used.

This brings me to an important question, which concerns the respective value of different sources to today's historian. Hagiographical and liturgical texts provide much of the background and the ambiance that documents lack. However, they also have shortcomings that can prove fateful. Many of these texts are difficult to date, were often written much later than the events they purport to describe, and contain little 'hard' information. They were composed for specific purposes, which must always be kept in mind when using them. For instance, their authors fail to disguise their often heavy-handed attempts 'to explain, and to maintain, the wealth of the [saint's] establishment',[6] and even to increase it when conditions allowed. Another common problem is the strong normative tendency of hagiographical literature. It often presents an image of the cult as it should be, or as the author wishes it were. Imitation of the saint and his pious behaviour are presented as the norm among a saint's following. Scholars are thus often misled into seeing the cult of saints as a very intellectual or spiritual phenomenon, which it may have been for some, but certainly not for the mass of the population involved in it. All this does not make for very reliable sources as far as their vision of the cult is concerned, except perhaps to show that it was a hotly contested space in the ecclesiastical and monastic circles where these texts were produced.

The evidence from the papyri both qualifies and supplements the usual hagiographical material. It tells of some practices that are left unmentioned in ecclesiastical sources, or sheds a colder light on some of hagiography's wilder claims concerning the popularity of such and such a saint. In most cases, these documents were not written to promote a specific cult, nor do they reflect the interests of ecclesiastical power centres or monastic communities. When a saint is invoked in an amulet or on a tombstone, we know the saint was venerated then and there by a certain number of people more surely than when we are told the same thing by the administrators of the saint's memory a couple of centuries later. Documents also bring to our notice a much greater number of churches dedicated to saints than do narrative texts. In 2001, I could compare the forty-three saints' shrines mentioned for Egypt by Pierre Maraval in his inventory of holy places to the 232 I had come across in papyri and inscriptions, and the latter is an ever-growing number.[7] One has to bear in mind, of course, that the distribution of Byzantine papyrological evidence does not exactly reflect the reality of Valley life during that period. The absence of the Delta, or of cities such as Panopolis or Lykopolis, obviously very active centres of

[6] Brown 1995: 63. [7] Papaconstantinou 2001: 14. Maraval 1985: 311–27.

Egyptian Christianity, is a sign that a purely papyrological vision can also be heavily distorted.

In this survey I shall adopt a chronological point of view, trying to bring out the main lines in the evolution of the cult after the middle of the fifth century and insisting on aspects of structure rather than on individual cases. In it, 'saint' is used to mean a character who, after his death, became the centre of a cult. This is far from including all the people about whom *Vitae* were written – namely martyrs, Biblical figures, bishops, special monks or 'holy men', and even some rather ordinary monks whose life could be a model to others. The surest sign distinguishing a saint from other religious figures in documentary sources is the use of the term *hagios* before his name. However, it can only work as a positive sign, since we note its absence in several cases where there are obvious signs of a public – or publicly recognized – cult. Among these signs, the presence of a shrine is probably the most compelling, and has been treated as such. Others are fixed public commemorations, prayers, invocations, or devotional objects, even though sometimes the relevance of such documents may be questioned. This definition obviously excludes living 'holy men', whose interaction with the society they lived in was of a quite different nature.

The middle of the fifth century is a convenient starting point, because it avoids the rather difficult question of the rise and early development of the cult of saints and the relative disagreement on this question between 'field' and 'literary' sources. Judging by their homilies, fourth-century bishops all over the empire seem to have been confronted with a flowering cult as early as the 370s,[8] but its manifestations hardly appear in documents before the middle of the fifth century, with the notable exception of a couple of texts.[9] Only after 450 does the cult actually become visible in the field. In the second half of the fifth century, it rapidly started rising into prominence in the cities and villages of the Nile Valley, until it reached its full potential in the sixth century. At that time, the late Roman city remained a centre producing strong civic identities and local patriotism, which were reflected in the structure adopted by the cult of saints. Mostly martyrs, the saints were defined primarily as city patrons. Cities, towns,

[8] See, for instance, Athanasius of Alexandria, *Festal Letters* 41 and 42, ed. Lefort 1955: 42–4 and 46–7; and the texts in Leemans et al. 2003.

[9] *P.Haun.* III 67, dated 398, mentions an offering to an unnamed martyr-shrine in Oxyrhynchos, and *P.Mert.* I 40, of the early fifth century, the feasts of 'John' and 'Eutropia' in the Arsinoite village of Selleion. A marble slab with the inscription 'the *oikos* of Ioannes the saint' was reused in a fifth-century Hermopolite church, which means it would have belonged (or referred) to some earlier structure: Bailey and Grossmann 1994: 64, ill. p. 65; see also the variant readings by Lajtar 1996 (repr. in *SEG* 44, 1455) and Bernand 1999: 95–7, no. 21bis/B. Unconvinced by both, I have preferred Bailey's text.

and villages would compete for the 'ownership' of one or several saints, often inventing a couple or so to enrich their pantheon.[10] The proliferation of saints' shrines in and around cities seems quite impressive during this period. In Oxyrhynchos and Aphrodite, two sites for which sixth-century evidence abounds, there were at that time thirty and thirteen churches respectively dedicated to saints alone. At the end of the fourth century, visitors to Oxyrhynchos had found twelve churches in all, and had deemed that number exceptionally high. Other cities probably experienced the same phenomenon. Even though Hermopolis has yielded less evidence for this early period, we nevertheless know of at least eight saints' shrines within the city alone, and four more in the surrounding countryside. It is in this region, in the neighbouring Antinoopolis, that we hear of one of the earliest Egyptian martyr shrines: that of Kollouthos, 'the local martyr', mentioned by Palladius in the late fourth or early fifth century.[11] It is probably also here that, around the year 400, the authors of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* venerated the bodies (*skênômata*) of the martyr Apollonios 'and those who were martyred with him'.[12]

The saints to whom the churches were dedicated partly made up the religious identity of each city. Thus Oxyrhynchos had its local martyrs, Serenus, Philoxenos and Iustus, as well as a special piety for Menas and the archangel Michael. In Hermopolis, the presence of John the Baptist is quite important at this early date, together with the archangels and Phoibammon. The sixth-century evidence from Aphrodite mentions several characteristic saints of the town or the region: Hermaouos, Onnophrios, Patemouos, Promaos, Horouonchios, as well as Victor, Kollouthos, Menas, Michael, and the Apostles. The limited early sources from Arsinoe mention Elias, George, and Dorotheos, of whom the last two were still venerated there at the end of the seventh century.

The saints accumulated by each city were inscribed in the urban and suburban environment through their shrines, of which we have comparatively little direct evidence. Many of the churches found in excavations remain unidentified, and certainly not all were dedicated to saints. However, several church lists from Oxyrhynchos[13] show how important these buildings, whatever their size, had become within the city and its immediate surroundings in the first half of the sixth century. They were part of the

[10] See Shenoute's *Catechesis* translated in Lefort 1954. The practice was by no means confined to Egypt or to provincial towns. The bishop of Milan, Ambrosius, and indeed the emperor himself, used the same tactics: see e.g. Dassmann 1975 and Mango 1990 with an 'Addendum', p. 434.

[11] Palladius, *HL* 60. [12] *HMA* 19.12.

[13] *P.Oxy.* LXVII 4617, 4618, 4619, 4620; XI 1357; *SPP* X 35; *PSI* VII 791; *P.Lond.* V 1762 (*BL* 10).

local economy and played an important role in the liturgical and festal life of the city. Stational liturgy was perhaps the institution that most effectively integrated the city's churches into a ritual network under the patronage of the bishop, who could thus better control this topographical proliferation of cult establishments. An exceptional document from Oxyrhynchos gives us a glimpse of how this worked at the level of a medium-sized provincial city.[14] Each saint's feast was publicly celebrated in his own church by the bishop himself, sometimes including processions through the streets. In the case of important saints, there were multiple celebrations in the shrine. The feast of the local martyr Philoxenos on Choiak 22 was the occasion of four consecutive days of celebration in his *martyrion*, followed by two days in that of the other local martyr, Serenus, which brought the calendar to Christmas Eve, itself celebrated over three days and followed on Tybi 1 by the feast of St Peter. There were thus ten days of episcopal celebrations combining local martyrs and an important Christian feast, and culminating in a procession between two churches on the last day. This situation made the period before the Nativity much more festive and solemn in Oxyrhynchos than in other cities, where the local martyrs had different commemoration days. There, the simple combination of the Nativity and St Peter's Day would have made for a much smaller festival. The same can be observed for the period between Hathyr 12 and 17 (at least), when the feasts of Michael the archangel, Menas, and the local martyr Iustus take place within less than a week. The period seems to have been named 'the feast of Saint Michael' by the inhabitants and to have lasted at least eight days.[15]

Such periods created a rhythm within the year specific to each city, and this specificity was created by the local saints, the other festivals such as the Nativity or some 'universal' saints being common to all. The bishop's choice to celebrate a second and a third stational service for a saint was partly dictated by the saint's popularity, but it also partly served to create that popularity by opening the possibility of a real festive period or *panegyris*. As is obvious from Oxyrhynchos, the moments chosen were also in accordance with the agricultural calendar and, in some cases at least, corresponded to traditional festive periods in that city.[16]

Starting around the middle of the sixth century, this general image gradually underwent a slow but lasting transformation that only became clearly visible

[14] Papaconstantinou 1996; in general, see Baldovin 1987.

[15] *PSI* I 63.24–8. [16] Papaconstantinou 1996.

much later. By the end of the century, the urban, suburban, or rural shrines that had until then been the cult's exclusive loci were being confronted with the competition of shrines housed within monasteries in the periphery of the towns. This seems to have happened in two main ways. At first monasteries seem to have promoted the cult of their own monastic saints. Later they are also found to be housing the cults of martyrs who were previously celebrated in independent shrines, either because the relics of these martyrs had been transported to monastic institutions, or because such institutions developed around established *martyria*.

Even though monks were the subject of many *Vitae* and much related literature in the fifth and sixth centuries, they were rarely the beneficiaries of a cult during that period. The earliest documentary mention of a monk bearing the title *hagios* alone is that of Jeremias of Saqqara in 545, but it does remain an exception.[17] Several others, such as Apollo, Onnophrios, Papnouthios, or Patermouthis, had their feast days celebrated or had churches dedicated to them. They often bore the title *hagios apa* or *hagios abba*, sometimes even *apa* or *abba* alone, more rarely simply *hagios*. However, most monastic saints mentioned in documentary sources appear during the seventh and eighth centuries.

It is the Middle Egyptian town of Aphrodite, which has preserved evidence both from the sixth century and from the turn of the seventh to eighth century, that may best illustrate this tendency. Of the thirteen or so shrines present in or around the town in the sixth century, two were dedicated to the Apostles, one to Michael the archangel, six at least to martyrs, two to unidentified saints, and only two to monastic saints, one of whom was the famous Onnophrios, not a local character. Two of them are presented as monasteries, one dedicated to the Apostles and the other to a local monastic saint. In the late seventh and early eighth centuries, there were eighteen religious institutions bearing the names of saints, among which we find the Apostles, two New Testament saints, two angels, six martyrs, two unidentified saints, and five monks, all local and celebrated in their own monastery. Of these, only the Apostles, two martyrs, one local monastic saint, and another local saint were already present in the sixth century.[18] Three cases are of particular interest here. The first two show monastic figures acquiring the status of saints. In 547, we meet *abba Henoch archimandritês*,[19] probably the founder of the monastery called *hagios apa Henoch* in a contract.[20] A century and a half later, this institution is named *topos*

[17] *CPR* X 122.8–11. [18] See Papaconstantinou 2001: 296–8.
[19] *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67242. [20] *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67234.6.

hagiou Henoch or *hagios Henoch*, and also *abba Henoch*.[21] Again, in the early sixth century, there was an institution called *topos apa Psoiou*, represented by a monk;[22] in the late seventh or the early eighth century, it had turned into *hagios Psoios*.[23] These were obviously not the only monks to have become saints at Aphrodite. Although they are unknown from sixth-century texts, *hagios Abraamios* and *hagios Psempnouthios* appear in late seventh- and early eighth-century texts which also call them *abba*, and even mention the *monastêrion abba Psempnouthiou*.[24] The opposite move is illustrated by the case of the martyr Hermaouos, whose oratory (*euktêrion*) is mentioned in the sixth century,[25] and seems to have been transformed into a monastery (*monastêrion, oros*) in the early Arab period.[26]

Few other sites offer sufficient evidence over a period long enough to allow such comparisons. Cities of some size such as Arsinoe or Hermopolis seem to have kept their network of urban and suburban saints' shrines well into the eighth century, and even later in the case of Hermopolis, with a pantheon essentially made up of well-known martyrs and Biblical saints. Oxyrhynchos has not yielded enough late evidence to allow generalizations. The few seventh-century texts from the city do not show much merging between monasteries and martyrs. On the other hand, between the sixth and the eighth century, the *martyrion* of the Antinoite martyr Kollouthos migrated from the city cemetery,[27] where it had probably been since Palladius saw it around 400, to the 'mountain' behind Antinoopolis.[28]

The evolution in the countryside is difficult to follow. However, this move towards the monasteries may be confirmed by the situation observed in the old Theban area. Massive documentary evidence from the region starts in the late sixth and continues through the eighth century, showing a flowering of religious institutions situated in small villages or standing alone in the countryside. Around the small town of Jeme on the west bank of the Nile there were at least thirty establishments dedicated to saints, mostly martyrs or Biblical figures, while we only know of three such churches in the main city, Hermonthis, and six in Jeme itself. The nature of most of these establishments remains unknown, as they are mostly called by the generic term *topos*. However, we may note the presence in the early eighth

[21] *P.Lond.* IV 1424.25; 1420.66, 108; 1555.23; 1572.1, 3, 7, 8, 20, 23, 28; 1419.1064, 1148, 1151; 1420.24, 38, 45, 74; 1424.13; 1459.26.
[22] *SB* XX 14669.182. [23] *P.Lond.* IV 1444.3.
[24] Psempnouthios: *P.Lond.* IV 1419.363, 1002, 1133; 1421; Abraamios: 1429.15; 1420.214; 1481.
[25] *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67288 col. 6.5. [26] See *P.Lond.* IV, index p. 583. [27] Manfredi 1984.
[28] Till 1935: 173 mentions 'the body of holy Apa Kollouthos in his *martyrion* on the mountain of his city Antinoe'. It was still there in the twelfth century, according to the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, fol. 8b (ed. Evetts 1895: 244).

century of a 'holy monastery of St (Apa) Paul' on the mountain of Jeme, founded by Paul 'the anchorite, who is now among the saints', sometime during the seventh century. In the neighbouring town of Ape, there was in the eighth century a monastery of St Sergios. Most significantly perhaps, during the seventh and eighth centuries, the religious landscape of the west bank was dominated by the Monastery of St Phoibammon, which was in possession of that martyr's relics and seems to have functioned as the main healing shrine in the region.

Villages of the nearby Koptite nome also housed some monastic saints. There was a *topos* dedicated to *hagios apa Abraham* at Tousieh, a church of *apa Onofrios* at Pallas, a *topos* of *apa Pesynthios* at Tche, one of Shenoute on the mountain of Pahme, and one of *hagios apa Hatre* on the mountain of Pmile. Martyrs were of course not entirely dislodged, and the same region had churches dedicated to Theodore, Kollouthos, and George, as well as to the very popular archangel Michael. Further to the north, near Panopolis – for which there is a cruel lack of documentary evidence – there is mention in the early eighth century of a *monastêrion hagiou Ieremiou* and of a *monastêrion hagiou Senouthiou*, a type of expression that was to become more and more common.

The rising role of the monasteries in the cult of saints marked the beginning of a slow process which was to form the characteristic structure of the medieval religious landscape, with monasteries and *martyria* converging in the same sites. The twelfth-century *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* shows Christian space dominated by monasteries bearing the names of the martyrs whose cults, and sometimes whose relics, they housed. This move has been explained by the rising insecurity for shrines situated outside the city walls, and the fact that it took place first in the south may seem to confirm this hypothesis. However, it is also in the south that we see a great number of rural shrines with no apparent protection. On the other hand, as time went by, even urban churches came to be dedicated to monastic saints such as Shenoute, Antony, or Onnophrios. With its roots well beyond insecurity, the 'monasticization' of the cult of saints was in fact a widespread phenomenon that still remains to be satisfactorily studied.

In the absence of a document such as the Oxyrhynchos stational calendar, it is quite difficult to know how, in this period, the various churches of a diocese were brought together into a coherent whole. The late sixth- and early seventh-century correspondence of bishop Abraham of Hermonthis, much of which was preserved in the ruins of St Phoibammon, reveals a rich network of rural churches dedicated to saints, and the bishop's concern for practical matters. Making sure that the service was celebrated and that the

altar light burnt day and night was the task of a cleric specially appointed by the bishop. However, nothing in this correspondence implies the existence of a mobile liturgy, which ensured that the bishop celebrated at least once a year in each church set under his jurisdiction. This may seem natural, given the predominantly rural setting of the churches and the high number of monasteries. After all, stational liturgy has been defined as a purely urban phenomenon, which marked the 'public cultural domination' of space and society by one religious group.[29] Hints of such a practice, though, come from several sermons by contemporaries of Abraham. John, bishop of Hermopolis, delivered his encomium of St Antony 'before a *topos* that is far from the city and before people who have come from the city and have yet to return to the city'[30]; and Constantine, bishop of Siut (Lykopolis), is twice seen celebrating the feast of St Claudius in the village of Pohe, once 'with all the people of the three cities' (namely Lykopolis, Hermopolis, and Panopolis),[31] the second time with 'all the people, men and women, and a crowd from the city of Shmun [Hermopolis], who had come for the feast'.[32] Of course, John and Constantine were bishops of two still important cities, while Abraham's see, Hermonthis, seems to have lost its lustre by the late sixth century. Abraham lived in an area of low urbanization, where civic identity may have declined earlier than elsewhere.

However, another explanation could come into play here. As Ewa Wipszycka has rightly noted, Abraham never seems to go to Hermonthis, and churches of that city never appear among the ones over which he has authority.[33] She understands this as a sign that the episcopal city was controlled by the Chalcedonian church, and probably had a Chalcedonian bishop, Abraham having been displaced towards a monastic residence. If this is the case, what about John and Constantine, also monophysite bishops, who conspicuously vaunt their links with 'the city'? In fact, these links hardly resist closer examination. That people should have come from the city does not mean that the bishop normally officiated there. Both bishops tell of their excursions in highly rhetorical works that follow earlier models of city pride and repeat a number of clichés. Constantine's second sermon is said to have been delivered in the presence of 'the vicar of the patriarch',[34] while the first was given before the prefect and 'an imperial envoy sent by the *basileus* with letters of peace'.[35] This last phrase could possibly allude

[29] Baldovin 1987: 262. [30] John of Hermopolis, *Panegyric of Saint Anthony*, ed. Garitte 1943: 347.
[31] Godron 1970: 509.
[32] Godron 1970: 593. Pisentius of Koptos probably also gave his sermon on Onnophrios in the village of Pallas: see Crum 1915–17: 41.
[33] See this volume, chapter 16 above. [34] Godron 1970: 593. [35] Godron 1970: 509.

to some attempt at reconciliation with the Chalcedonian party, and may confirm the impression that Constantine also had his episcopal authority restricted to a rural network.[36] Indeed, of the few surviving sermons by those bishops, none is given in their respective episcopal cities. Such a shift of the anti-Chalcedonian clergy could go a long way towards explaining the displacement of at least some cults from the cities towards rural and monastic settings.[37]

Considering the degree of change that has been described, it may seem remarkable that many scholars have seen in the cult of saints a field where continuities are most striking. Many practices support this view, to be sure, repeated as they are century after century, in Egypt as elsewhere, until Erasmus and beyond. The Egyptians formed a traditional rural society who brought to the divine basic questions concerning subsistence, procreation, health, and protection. Some of the problems raised might have been particular to the Egyptian landscape, such as scorpions, against which St Phokas offered protection, or the eye-illness caused by the desert sand against which St Kollouthos had a recipe. Most of them, however, seem as eternal and as universal as the ways in which they were tackled.[38]

Capturing holy beneficence was achieved by various means. The easiest and probably the most common was the use of amulets that bore the names or the images of saints, or even more elaborate texts containing invocations to such and such a holy figure. They could be made of stone or metal, but also of a bit of papyrus which was folded into a small enough shape to be hung around the neck. Some were used as protection in general; others had a more specific purpose, such as the healing of an illness, often fever. Michael and Gabriel are the most popular saints in these texts, but local saints appear in many of them. Some of the texts found on papyrus may have been written by the wearers themselves, but many were probably brought back from visits to a saint's establishment, where they were produced by 'professionals', as their often formulaic nature and theological correctness indicate.

[36] In the fourth and fifth centuries, 'letters of peace' were a restricted form of the letter of recommendation, which were intended only for the less prominent laity and only provided for physical support. Already in the sixth century, however, this initial meaning seems to have been lost: see Teeter 1997, esp. 958. Here, the status of the bearer definitely excludes its traditional use, and the context could favour a more literal interpretation of the term, which the passage to Coptic may have fostered.

[37] This can only be a partial explanation, however, considering that the same shift took place in parts of the empire where there was no anti-Chalcedonian hierarchy. The concentration both of text production and of the training of the higher clergy within the monasteries must also be taken into account.

[38] See in particular Frankfurter 1998a.

Other vehicles of the holy were the various *eulogiai* that could be obtained at sanctuaries. Oil, water, or dust often came from the immediate vicinity of the saint's tomb. They could be sanctified by presumed contact with the saint's relics. At Abu Mina, the oil that filled the thousands of *ampullae* carried away by the pilgrims was taken from a jar of oil placed underneath the crypt's altar, where the martyr's body would have lain.[39] Oil could also come from the lamps that burnt next to the tomb, and water from holy springs in shrines. These kinds of *eulogiai* do not appear at all in papyri: they are known by archaeological finds and by the descriptions given in narrative texts. A couple of accounts, however, mention another kind of saint's *eulogiai*, small white breads distributed during feast days.

In the description of such practices, the various sets of sources tend to give the same picture of the cult. However, through papyri we learn of a practice almost unmentioned in other sources, namely the oracular activity of saints' shrines. Although various kinds of divination techniques were otherwise known, such as dreams during incubation or *sortes sanctorum*, a number of papyrus leaflets from three or four shrines also show the continuing use of an age-old oracular technique. Petitioners presented their questions about the future in pairs, one in the positive and one in the negative form, and the saint made the right one 'come out'. Most queries were about the stance to be taken in some future action, often related to health, but sometimes also to business. They were presented to Philoxenos in Oxyrhynchos, to Kollouthos in Antinoopolis, to Leontios and perhaps Kosmas and Damian in shrines whose location remains uncertain. These were either physician saints (Kollouthos, Kosmas, and Damian) or saints who had *nosokomeia* attached to their shrines (Philoxenos and Leontios).[40]

The best way to obtain all those benefits was by travelling to the saint's shrine, or by sending somebody there who would bring back the *eulogiai*. The number of visitors to saints' shrines seems to have risen considerably in the course of the sixth century, if we take the size of the churches as an indication. In Oxyrhynchos, the church of St Philoxenos, already present in the first half of the sixth century, underwent considerable rebuilding towards the end of that century, at which time it was obviously a very big structure, housing, among other activities, the oracle of the saint and perhaps even the related *nosokomeion*. The size of St Philoxenos' church can only be inferred from an account of the stones used in that rebuilding.[41]

[39] Grossmann 1989: 64–9 and figs. 11, 13.

[40] *P.Oxy.* VIII 1150 (Philoxenos). *SPP* III 314; 47.1, verso; 47.1, 16, 21 (Leontios). See Papaconstantinou 1994: 281–6, 2001: 336–9, and 2005.

[41] *P.Oxy.* XVI 2041.

Archaeological remains of similar shrines, however, confirm this kind of development.[42] The most impressive is of course that of Abu Mina, to the south-west of Alexandria. It all started in the late fourth or early fifth century, with the building of a simple mausoleum over the martyr's supposed tomb. By the end of the sixth century, Abu Mina had been transformed into a huge pilgrimage centre whose focal point was still the tomb of the martyr. But it was now rebuilt as a tetraconch, and was accompanied by several churches, *xenodocheia* meant to accommodate pilgrims, and housing for local personnel, so that, in the end, Abu Mina looked like a classical city in its own right, with colonnaded streets and public buildings.[43]

This extraordinary development of the site in the sixth century reflects that of the cult of saints in general, but it more specifically echoes the great popularity of Menas' cult, both within Egypt and elsewhere. Pilgrims' flasks with oil from Abu Mina have been found in places as remote as Romania or southern France. Most cults, however, were of more modest proportions, and so was the development of their shrines, which in most cases were situated in the immediate vicinity of cities. This is also true of the practice of travelling to saints' shrines, usually called pilgrimage by scholars and hagiographers alike. Documentary evidence only partly supports hagiography's insistence on large-scale pilgrimage to saints' shrines. Pilgrims from afar were obviously an exception, and a rare one at that. Graffiti left on the walls of various establishments or on the surrounding rocks show the traffic was in fact extremely local. People from neighbouring towns particularly seem to have made such trips on the saint's feast day, when along with the saint's blessing they would also find a festive meal awaiting them. The use of the term pilgrimage in this context may be slightly confusing, since it normally evokes a rather long voyage to 'the centre out there', to use Victor Turner's famous phrase.[44]

The saint's favours were not entirely free of charge. Beneficiaries were expected to present their offerings to the shrine, in the form of votive objects, of goods for the preparation of the saint's feast, but also, for richer members of the community, of financial contributions for repairs, decoration, or the erection of outbuildings. The *Passions* and *Miracles* read out during the liturgical celebration of the saint's feast constantly reminded their public that piety and gratitude were highly esteemed virtues in the saint's eyes.

There were two ways of calling upon oneself the saint's protection without any direct or indirect contact with his shrine. One was at death, when a

[42] What we know about the wealth of religious institutions also points in the same direction: see Bagnall 1992 and 1993: 289–93.
[43] Grossmann 1998. [44] Turner 1973. See also Kötting 1988, and the classic Kötting 1950.

saint was invoked in the epitaph to see the deceased through his last voyage; and the other was at birth, when a child was named after a saint. The choice of patron was of course in both cases made by somebody else, according to criteria that most of the time remain undecipherable to us. However, in some cases, the pairings of names between parent and child have an obvious connection, as for example the Oxyrhynchite couple Serenus and Philoxena who called their son Iustus, thus placing their household under the triple patronage of the local martyrs Serenus, Philoxenos, and Iustus. We know of women named Thecla who called their sons Paul, thus reproducing the duo of the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*,[45] of physicians who were named Kollouthos, a famous physician saint,[46] and even of a man named Theodore who called his son Stratelates.[47]

The stability of such practices is indeed striking. The extreme importance of health questions among the varied problems brought before the saints, the role of spatial proximity with the saint's purported material remains, the possibility of transferring the saint's power to different media so as to take it home, as well as what the beneficiaries had to offer in return all remain the same throughout the period, and are not fundamentally different from what Erasmus described. The general structure of the 'saint' population also remained stable from the fifth to the eighth century and beyond, although the individuals who made it up were constantly renewed. From the earliest years, the saints formed a pyramid with at its top a few famous martyrs who were venerated all over the country and at its bottom a mass of local saints who were hardly known outside their city or region, and who slowly disappeared to be replaced by others as time went by. The top group also changed, but less radically, especially through the appearance of St Mercurius and the breakthrough of St George, who became the two most important martyrs in the medieval period.

It is not entirely without reason, then, that historians have considered the cult of saints as the domain of continuities. However, even though one can hardly see any chronological variation on the surface, changes there were. These did not affect so much the practices as their meaning and function, and the discourse that carried them. As noted above, visits to shrines intensified in the course of the sixth century, probably a sign of the increasing control of religious institutions over the cult's practices. At the same time, there was a growing insistence on the glory of the martyr,

[45] *O.Douch* I 20.1; *P.Mich.* XIII 668 r.1; see Davis 1999 (repr. as Appendix B in Davis 2001: 201–8).
[46] *CPR* IV 130. [47] Munier 1930–1: 446, no. 106.

who was given longer and more sophisticated titles as time went by, and seems to have become a more remote figure. The model of the 'physician' seems to have lost its symbolic power in favour of the 'general' or *stratêlatês*, as implied by the slow decline of Kollouthos or Kosmas and Damian set against the rise of Victor, George, Mercurius, or Phoibammon. As for the composition of the *Vitae* and the content of *Miracle* collections, they followed the general tendency of hagiographical writing, which was itself linked to the monasticization of the cult of saints. The focal point of this very normative literature gradually shifted between the fifth and the eighth century. While initially it was aimed above all at obtaining the conversion of the remaining infidels who visited the saints, or, after the Council of Chalcedon, adherence to and constancy in the 'orthodox' creed, with time it laid more and more weight on the financial support expected by the saint for the glory of his establishment. Those who forgot to show their gratitude were often wildly chastised, and were only pardoned after (and if) they had done their duty. In this way, the saints actually patronized their own establishments, helping them raise the funds they needed to stay in the very competitive race between shrines. With the move of martyrs into monasteries, the latter also benefited from the system; this proved extremely useful in the eighth century, when taxation of monastic estates was introduced by the Arabs.

Although changes in the structure of the cult of saints started before the Arab conquest, somewhere around the late sixth and the early seventh century the situation created by the Caliphate's dominion reinforced the new structure and helped it take a new turn. Saints seem to have definitely lost power over cities, which were now mostly in 'infidel' hands and hardly the glamorous entities they had once been. The new social entity of the Christians in the Islamic empire was the local community. Following the move, the saint was now no longer the patron of a city, protecting it against outside dangers and used by the bishop and the people to enhance its prestige, but the patron of a community, offering it a sort of symbolic or mythical paternity and a shared socio-religious experience.[48] His memory and cult were often administered by monastic circles, where accounts of his *Life* and *Miracles* were written and copied, and where bishops themselves now almost exclusively received their training.

Structurally, institutionally, and ideologically, the Egyptian cult of saints was transformed between its beginnings and the Umayyad period. Of course, consciousness of such macro-historical change among Egyptian

[48] Papaconstantinou (2006); Naguib 1994.

Christians was probably even weaker than it has been among historians. The continuity, indeed the 'immobility', of exterior forms of worship, which are the main focus of religious historians, can however be quite misleading. Through the timeless repetition of the 'culturally-inscribed gestures, responses, habits . . . that inform the supplicants' behaviour before saints',[49] the Christian communities most certainly created for themselves a reassuring sense of continuity, reinforced by a hagiographical production which prompted them to identify with the heroic past of the persecutions and the origins of the Egyptian church. The need for such stability was probably never greater than in times when important changes were taking place, so that, to a certain extent, it has worked as a veil behind which these changes are hidden. To paraphrase Antony Cutler and Alexander Kazhdan, who two decades ago went against the tide in denying the cultural continuum between Byzantium and classical antiquity, 'sometimes it is the Egyptian yearning for continuity that prevents us from seeing discontinuity'.[50]

Ultimately, it is perhaps the lens through which one looks at the cult of saints that determines how one sees it. At the level of the individual supplicants, saints did fill essentially the same needs throughout our period and even beyond, as Erasmus' complaints testify. Seen from further afield, however, those saints had a different identity, acted differently, and were used by institutions in quite different ways as time went by – and, despite a deep attachment to tradition, those changes were not entirely unrelated to the transformation of the society of the supplicants themselves.

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[49] Frankfurter 2003: 345.

[50] Kazhdan and Cutler 1982: 476, with 'Byzantine' instead of 'Egyptian'; see also 478: 'Continuity was rather the exterior shape of its existence, a form of its self-consciousness, capable of masking its real discontinuity.'

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CHAPTER 18

Divine architects: Designing the monastic dwelling place[1]

Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom

Several passages from the literary sources of early monasticism illustrate that monastics recognized that not all spaces could foster spiritual encounters and that the true test of spiritual progress was found when one relocated to a space dedicated to ascetic living. Besa, a fifth-century abbot (466–74) of the famous White Monastery in Middle Egypt, wrote of the need for harmony in the community of the desert:

> If you yourselves will not dwell in ruined and abandoned places where there are wild beasts, and where foxes, snakes, and scorpions breed, and where swine feed, then how shall the Spirit of Christ dwell in your ruined souls and your destroyed hearts and your bodies which are lairs of unclean spirits?[2]

This passage is indicative of the spatial imagery employed by monastic leaders to explicate the relationship between the temporal and the spiritual realms. There were clear benefits to living in monastic space and dangers to be found in non-monastic space. Abba Moses said: 'Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.'[3] However, one could also misuse this space. Abba Ammonas recognized the challenge that focusing in the cell held for most individuals. He said: 'A person may remain for a hundred years in his cell without learning how to live in the cell.'[4] In the end, a monk could flee the urban world, reside in a community of fellow ascetics, and still face the same demons and distractions he had experienced in the city.

The movement to abandoned, literally deserted, areas is often a component of making monastic space; although some monastics remained in

[1] This paper is based upon research for my dissertation, Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom, '*Your Cell Will Teach You All Things': The Relationship between Monastic Practice and the Architectural Design of the Cell in Coptic Monasticism, 400–1000* (Ph.D. Diss., Miami University, Dept. of History, 2001). Versions of chapters for this work have been presented at Society of Biblical Literature, Byzantine Studies Conference, Medieval International Conference, and Midwest Medievalists.

[2] *P.Lond.Copt.* 175 in Crum 1905. Kuhn titled this text 'On Individual Responsibility for Sins' in *Letters and Sermons* (Leuven 1956).

[3] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Moses 6: Ward 1975. [4] Ibid., Poemen 96.

rural and urban settings, their experiences are more difficult for us to access than those of the monks who created new environments. The monks who moved to these locations lived within the dichotomous landscape of cultivation and desert cliffs; it was a location that was not remote, or removed, from the agricultural land, but just on the edge and not that far at all from the communities they once lived in before relocating to a monastic settlement. Here, in close proximity to the non-monastic world, monks built their communities, which were established upon the principles of poverty and a commitment to God that they believed could not be maintained in older urban and agricultural environments.

Once the monk was in the desert, the monastic cell became the area for true spiritual work. The emphasis upon the monastic life within this new location, specifically the monk's cell, is illustrated in a short treatise by Paul of Tamma, a mid-fourth century monk from Middle Egypt. He compares the life of a monk in his cell to incense offered to God in the holy Temple in Jerusalem. For this Byzantine monk, his dwelling was the tabernacle of God, and by residing in this space the monk learned how to see God:

> You shall be a wise man in your cell, building up your soul as you sit in your cell, while glory is with you, while humility is with you, while the fear of God surrounds you day and night, while your cares are thrown down, while your soul and your thoughts watch God in astonishment, gazing at him all the days of your life.[5]

While the literary tradition of the great desert fathers and mothers of Egypt preserves a memory of the dwellings and their importance for daily living, we are told very little about how they were built to aid a monk in attaining the spiritual sight that Paul of Tamma speaks of.

Monastic space in late antique Egypt concretely exemplifies both the idea of social space as a product of relationships within a place[6] and space as defined by an individual's hopes and actions within that space.[7] For the monks of Egypt, monastic space primarily included an area that was perceived to be inherently different from other spaces. The place where monks lived was not just a community of like-minded individuals; rather, the area was a holy space filled with *sacred dwellings*. For non-monastics, the settlements were gateways to heaven, to God's kingdom on earth, bringing all Christians into closer proximity with God. The sacrality of these spaces and the individuals who lived in the dwellings attracted visitors and pilgrims

[5] *On the Cell* 77, in Vivian and Pearson 1998; Paul of Tamma, *Opere*, ed. and trans. T. Orlandi (Rome 1998), 106–7.

[6] Lefebvre 1991: 82–3.

[7] Bachelard 1969 also understood space to be a product of power and action. A dwelling therefore was a space defined by memories from the past, experiences of the present, and hopes for the future.

from around the eastern Mediterranean. Even sleeping in the cell of a famous monk was thought to bring an individual into closer relationship with the divine.[8] A brother who wished to leave the monastery confided in his father, who said to him: 'Go and sit in your cell and give your body in pledge to the walls of the cell, and do not come out of it. Let your imagination think what it likes, only do not let your body leave the cell.'[9]

These literary sources, along with the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, saints' lives, and travelogues, provide a theoretical and elite view of Egyptian monasticism that reflects the world view of the late fourth and fifth centuries. However, when we compare these accounts with the documentary evidence in the form of papyri, ostraca, and graffiti from Byzantine monastic contexts, we observe a much more complex view of boundaries, asceticism, and monastic settlement. In the end, we are left to patch together monastic spatial ideals from written observations, admonitions against improper behaviour in spaces, descriptions of land grants, and passing references to space in hagiographic stories. The central importance of the archaeological evidence, the artefactual remains from monastic sites, becomes apparent when the written sources diminish and the only records that remain are the material artefacts of the community.

The uneven nature of the archaeological record for Byzantine monasticism in Egypt is reflective of the historical development of archaeological method and theory. Traditional archaeology in Egypt was, for the most part, engaged in the recovery of objects of the pharaonic periods and therefore Byzantine remains of monastic or Christian communities were noted and frequently removed. Some of the largest monastic sites, notably Bawit and Saqqara, were excavated at a time when methodological concerns were simply not essential in the field, and one is pained by the fleeting references to the existence of Coptic remains at a site, only to find no photographs, plans, or discussions in the full publication.[10] What once was is no longer there.

However, all is not lost, as there are current archaeological projects underway at monastic sites throughout Egypt. Likewise, other avenues of research are producing good results as a corrective to the somewhat shaky beginnings of archaeological study of Egyptian monasticism. With these various constraints in mind, the dates of the sites discussed below are only estimates

[8] A young monk who has been labelled as a heretic for his anti-Chalcedonian views is prohibited from sleeping in the cell of Evagrius.

[9] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the Anonymous collection, Nau 205.

[10] Excavations have recently been resumed at Bawit and will provide invaluable evidence to aid in the interpretation of the site and in understanding the monastic settlement associated with Apa Apollo.

until a tighter chronology is developed for monastic architecture. The sites included here demonstrate that despite the size of the site's excavation or the method of recovery, the physical remains, from the fifth through the tenth century, provide ample evidence for beginning a history of monastic dwellings and settlements.

The diversity of the physical remains of monastic settlements in Egypt is substantially more complex than it might appear based upon the literary and documentary evidence.[11] By considering convergences between artefacts, architecture, and texts we can begin to appreciate how rich the archaeological record for the settlement of the desert for monastic living actually is.[12] Two questions will shape the evidence presented below: where did monastics, these divine architects, live, and what kinds of environments did they build that would shape their religious experience?

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND ADAPTIVE REUSE

Monks settled on both sides of the Nile, within the Delta area, and in areas connected with travel routes such as in the Fayyum, in Wadi an-Natrun, and in Wadi 'Araba, by the Red Sea. The following examples are selective and diagnostic, reflecting the diversity of monastic architecture in Egypt and the evolutionary nature of settlement patterns. An examination of representative dwelling areas from sample sites will exhibit the wealth of material available for the exploration of general patterns of building, decoration, and use. I have used four broad categories to help classify the settlements, in order to establish a framework for examining how and where monastics constructed space for ascetic living. Two of the categories involve the adaptive reuse of existing structures: first, temples, and second, tombs and/or cemeteries. The third category of settlement requires constructing sites in the natural environment, mainly by expanding a naturally formed cave in the hills or cliffs. The fourth category includes purpose-built structures exclusively for monastic living.

To assume that all pharaonic and Graeco-Roman temples were altered for monastic use by a particular formula oversimplifies a very complex issue of transferring sacrality from one religious tradition to another. The

[11] The following material is based upon research for my dissertation, Brooks Hedstrom 2001.

[12] For the most part, these spaces are assumed by excavators to be the residences of men. While women's ascetic communities existed in Egypt, for example the women of the White Monastery and at Abydos, very few artefactual remains are extant of the residences of women to allow for a careful study of the comparable nature of monasticism for men and women. See Krawiec 2003; Wilfong 2002: 109–10; Murray 1904.

relatively few monasteries built within temples point to a sporadic reuse of pagan temples. More commonly, one finds indications that part of a temple was reused as a church or chapel.[13] The adaptation or alteration of these structures was made by using common symbols, in particular images of saints, martyrs, and a cross such as those seen at the pharaonic centres of Deir el-Medineh, Luxor Temple, and the temple at Philae (**Figs.** 18.1–2).[14] Additionally, there is evidence of white plaster covering pharaonic images and also the defacement of figural forms. Graffiti with crosses and invocations for prayer are also frequently applied along entranceways or paths towards a specific designation within the building or complex. In some cases, such markings could indicate the results of a ritual process of sacralization.

At Luxor Temple, the remains of five churches have been identified,[15] but no monastic settlements were found, whereas at Karnak Temple three monastic communities were identified within the walls of the massive pylon gates.[16] Like other remains of the Byzantine period in Egypt, the evidence was poorly documented.

Perhaps the best example of adaptive reuse of a temple is found at the site of Deir el-Bahri, which was excavated most recently by W. Godlewski in the 1980s.[17] The monastic site represents the reuse of the mortuary temple of the eighteenth-dynasty pharaoh, Hatshepsut. Godlewski's work demonstrates the rewards of careful excavation and analysis of a previously excavated site. By drawing upon both archival work of Naville's earlier excavation there in the late nineteenth century and his own mapping and salvage excavation at the site, Godlewski has provided convincing evidence that the site should be identified as the Monastery of Phoibammon.[18]

REUSED TOMBS

Sites through Egypt testify that monastics preferred to adapt and reuse pharaonic tombs and mortuary temples, such as Deir el-Bahri, for monastic dwellings, rather than pharaonic temples, which were instead used for churches or chapels. The tombs at Abydos,[19] Beni Hasan, Helwan,

[13] Grossmann 2002.
[14] While opinions generally concur that the Christian monks and laity are responsible for the defacement or alteration of pharaonic monuments, Habachi 1972 argued that the temples which were used by Christians in the fourth through the seventh century were not intentionally destroyed.
[15] Grossmann 1973; Grossmann and Whitcomb 1992–3: 25–34 and pls. I-VI; Abdul Qader 1968: 227–9.
[16] Coquin 1972; Jullien 1902; Munier and Pellet 1929; Traunecker and Golvin 1984: 29–32.
[17] Godlewski 1986. [18] Godlewski 1982 and 1984: 111–19 and ills. 1–6.
[19] Tombs D 68 and 69 in Peet (1914): 49–50, pl. XII; 50–3, figs. 16–19.

Figure 18.1 Temple of Philae; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

Figure 18.2 Luxor Temple and remains of two churches; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

Amarna, Wadi Sarga, Thebes, and Aswan typify the manner in which these places were altered for monastic living.[20] The best-known of the reused tomb dwellings is the Monastery of Epiphanius, as it was later called by the excavators of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and then published by Winlock and Crum.[21] It is a small site located in the area of the tombs of the Nobles on the west bank of Thebes and dates from the sixth–eighth century.

The settlement extends out from six Middle Kingdom tombs that were adapted for monastic living, with the central area being the Tomb of Daga. This space would later become the residence of Epiphanius, the revered father of the community. Two large towers were built after his death and were prominent in the site's excavated remains. A final phase of the settlement included buildings and agricultural property located outside of the surrounding, low walls. The buildings were made from a combination of sun-dried bricks and small stones found in the area. In places where plaster still remained at the time of excavation, inscriptions and prayers could be read, especially near the entrance to the dwelling of Epiphanius. Despite the poorer preservation of the architecture, the discovery of several ostraca has

[20] Badawy 1953: 67–89 and figs. 1–24. [21] Winlock et al. 1926.

Figure 18.3 Naqlun hills; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

allowed us to investigate in more detail the daily events of the inhabitants and obtain a glimpse of how they viewed their dwellings.

CREATING SPACE IN CAVES

Like tombs, caves were places that were easily modified for monastic use and will be considered the third category of monastic dwellings. Naturally occurring crevices presented existing walls that could be refined with plaster and then extended with a courtyard in front of the cave. The construction process is very similar to what we find in the reuse of tombs. In sites at Gebel an-Naqlun in the Fayyum, the cliffs by the Red Sea, and settlements at Deir el-Dik, Deir Sanbat, and Deir en-Nasara, we find evidence of monastic dwellings carved out of the natural caves and cliffs of the hillsides.

In the south-eastern edge of the Fayyum near the present Deir el-Malak Gubrial are the remains of an early monastic community. The site consists of over ninety *menshobia* that were literally carved out of the pebbly hills that skirt the edge of the cultivation of the Fayyum (**Fig.** 18.3). The settlement was only known within Egypt, unlike the famous sites of Kellia and Sketis that are well attested in Patristic literature.[22] The dwellings are scattered

[22] For excavation reports, see Godlewski 1997a; Godlewski et al. 1994; Godlewski et al. 1990. Preliminary reports are published annually in *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*.

Figure 18.4 Naqlun hermitage; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

around the hills, some being as far apart as 2 km while others are as little as 1 m apart.[23] The majority of the buildings were actually cut from the soft conglomerate hills and the exterior walls were protected from natural erosion by the use of walls made with plaster, fired bricks, dried mudbricks, and irregular stones.

The hermitages follow a similar plan with a cluster of rooms off an enclosed or gated courtyard. The dwellings are entered by a flat terrace or courtyard between the sloping sides of adjoining hills. The large room was equipped with a storage pit in the floor, several niches lining the walls, a secondary entrance to a comparatively smaller room (identified as the sleeping chamber), and frequently subsidiary rooms (**Fig.** 18.4). All of the dwellings bear evidence of a kitchen or cooking facility that was separate from the other rooms occupied. Since 1986 five hermitages have been excavated and published. A sample dwelling from Naqlun is Hermitage 44, which is located in the middle of the cliffs. The complexity of the dwelling's plan suggests that the area was occupied in two distinct periods that required the area to be rebuilt in some cases.[24] Complex B (with five associative rooms off the central space B.1.) follows the basic plan seen at Naqlun of a large day room with smaller adjacent rooms carved carefully from the surrounding rock.

[23] Dobrowolski 1992: 314. [24] Godlewski 1996 and 1997b.

Small finds from this hermitage date to the fifth century, thereby making the dwelling one of the earliest found thus far at Naqlun. Coins, Greek texts, and imported wares from Cyprus and North Africa point to a rather wealthy individual who owned glass vessels along with imports for daily use. Signs of luxury such as these at Naqlun and at other sites raise the question of how austere monastic life was and nuance our definition of asceticism. The discovery of Coptic magical papyri fragments and a small bronze spoon has led the excavators to suggest that the inhabitant offered medical services to other monks and non-monastics in the area. The monastics that resided here lived in less elaborate dwellings than those of larger communities at Kellia or at Bawit, which included large, free-standing structures that were independent and reflect Athanasius' statement that the monks were building cities in the desert. The communities were less a part of the natural landscape than those seen at Naqlun and at the cliff dwelling of Deir el-Dik.

BUILT STRUCTURES

The previous categories of habitation accord with the ideal of ascetic living found in the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, with an emphasis upon relatively small dwellings that lacked the greater comforts and temptations of a village or city dwelling. However, as we consider the final category of self-designed monastic settlements, one sees a monastic world that on the surface is significantly more elaborate and reflective of urban living than what appears in the literary accounts. The fourth category of monastic architecture includes purpose-built structures that were planned to include highly decorative cells, prayer areas, kitchens, churches, and facilities for pilgrims.[25]

While the literary tradition recounts several examples in which monks built their own cells wherever they were, using mudbricks, the extensiveness of such settlements is only alluded to in passing. The result is that the literary evidence creates only a limited account of monastic settlement and architectural planning. Unlike elsewhere in the Byzantine world, there are no *typika* from Egyptian sites, which would record the founding, the rules, and the regulations of the monastery or dwelling. Rather, we are left with a substantial, although rather eclectic, body of archaeological remains. The most wide-ranging corpus includes the purpose-built structures that appear ostensibly to be the architectural plans of a community committed to living for God and with God in these spaces.

The examples discussed below also demonstrate that monastic architecture even in this category of *purpose-built structures* did not conform

[25] For a discussion of the painted walls of monastic cells, see Elizabeth Bolman, chapter 20.

Figure 18.5 Menshobia at John the Little's Monastery in Wadi an-Natrun; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

to a set pattern of design. Where there is flexibility in the form of such elements as cells, communal areas, and churches, the spaces also illustrate how monastics marked their dwellings with images, prayers, or crosses. The physical location of the sites, in relationship to the Nile or the desert, is not uniform, nor is the way in which the buildings are adapted to their local setting. Such variation affords us an opportunity to reconsider why monks chose one site rather than another to which to relocate, and that latitude in ascetic practice was also evident in the construction of ascetic dwellings. Three sites that are diagnostic of this ideal are Kellia in the north-west Delta, Bawit in Middle Egypt, and Esna in Upper Egypt. Other excavated sites that share features with these include the monasteries and dwellings at Sketis in Wadi an-Natrun, the Monastery of Jeremias at Saqqara, Deir el-Balaizah, and Abu Fano in Middle Egypt (**Figs.** 18.5–6).

The first site is Kellia, which extends over 16 km², and was excavated in the 1970s and 1980s. A survey of the area identified over 1,500 monastic structures[26] clustered into seventeen discernable groups, of which five

[26] Kasser 1972 noted at least 1,500 structures during his survey, although only 900 of these appeared to be still structurally intact for possible excavation. The site of Kellia has been excavated by independent French and Swiss missions. The most recent publications that include relevant bibliography are Bridel 2003 and Henein and Wuttmann 2000.

Figure 18.6 Monastery of Jeremias at Saqqara; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

exhibited a higher percentage of occupation than the other areas.[27] The initial structures at Kellia were designed for one or two monks in the fifth century.[28] The general monastic dwelling included a small house attached to the north-west corner of a small enclosure wall (**Fig.** 18.7). The wall likely served as a protective barrier, similar to walls used for Byzantine farmhouses. Despite the massive size of Kellia's settlement, there is no evidence that the monks at Kellia lived behind a large wall as found at Saqqara, Deir al-Abiad (the White Monastery), and Deir el-Balaizah.[29]

QR 306 represents a typical dwelling at Kellia that was built in the late fifth century and was expanded until its abandonment after the ninth century,[30] with a core dwelling surrounded by a courtyard. The elder monk was the occupant of four rooms clustered around a central prayer room that is marked with east-facing niches, painted crosses, and numerous inscriptions. An eastern door in the foyer limited access to this set of rooms. Moving to the south, an adjoining set of rooms, smaller in scale, is thought to be the residence of the disciple or junior monk, whose responsibilities

[27] Kasser 1967: 13–19. The more densely populated areas are also later in date, seventh–ninth century.
[28] Makowiecka 1993: 103. [29] Grossmann 1993. [30] Kasser et al. 1994.

Figure 18.7 Kellia; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

included work in the kitchen and storage areas of this zone. This first settlement reflects the type of dwelling noted as a late fifth–early sixth-century dwelling.[31] The second phase of QR 306 was the addition of two rooms to the west of the kitchen in the seventh century. The third phase is distinguished as the period in which large audience halls were built to accommodate visitors and pilgrims.[32] Indicators of new patterns of decoration and marking are represented by the painted rugs placed on the floors of the double halls built in this final stage.[33] In its final phase the dwelling had expanded from twelve rooms to a complex residence with dwellings added to the north, east, and south of the original fifth-century core. With ninety-nine graffiti on the walls and several painted images both geometric and figural, QR 306 has provided us with a dwelling that contains the very voices of ancient monastics, telling us how they understood these spaces in relation to their spiritual life. The images and graffiti on the walls are records of the active participants in ascetic living.[34]

[31] S. Favre, 'Description et analyse architecturale', in Kasser et al. 1994: 275.
[32] Favre in Kasser et al. 1994: 276.
[33] Rugs were also painted on the floor at QR 227 in an unusual triple-room hall (see QR 201). See F. Bonnet, P. Bridel, S. Favre, and G. Nogara, 'Ermitage QR 227', in Kasser et al. 1994: 58–66.
[34] Many of the inscriptions found on the walls of QR 306 are in Coptic and twenty are written in Arabic: W. Vycichl 1994.

Frequently Kellia, Saqqara, and Bawit[35] are presented as the signature sites of monastic life in Byzantine Egypt. The reason for this is that all three have produced fascinating finds of monastic culture and these items continue to be tapped for even more evidence for the history of monasticism from the late antique period to the Fatimid period.[36] Neighbouring monastic settlements such as Abu Fano[37] and Deir el-Dik,[38] to the north, and Deir el-Balaizah and Wadi Sarga to the south indicate that Bawit was part of an extensive monastic community in Middle Egypt.[39]

Among the one hundred buildings cleared at Bawit in the early twentieth century there were few similarities between rooms; thus far no predictable pattern for monastic planning is evident.[40] Several elements make Bawit unique in comparison with other monastic sites. First, the location of the site is not directly associated with a necropolis or a domestic settlement.[41] Second, the layout of the site, as much as can be gleaned from the incomplete reports, does not follow a predictable form; the layout of the cells is irregular. Third, some of the smaller buildings were two-storeyed with extensive painted programs on the walls of the first floor.

The last, and most distinctive, example of purpose-built structures is the fifteen dwellings found at Esna, located 4 km from the present-day convent of Deir es-Shuhada'. The remarkable feature of these structures is that they are subterranean buildings.[42] The architects at Esna implemented a design that considered both the heat of the desert and the sand accumulation from sandstorms. The dwellings are equipped with ventilation shafts to cool the rooms, and low-rise sand barriers were placed in front of all entranceways to prevent sand from accumulating in the rooms. A staircase led down to a central, open-air courtyard (average dimensions 4 × 4 m) at the core of the dwelling, and this communal space allowed light and air into the more secluded, subterranean rooms. The architecture, wall paintings, and inscriptions provide the only evidence for reconstructing the history of this small community and its daily activities. Small finds were minimal at best, indicating that the monks left the community with the freedom to take their possessions with them, such as papyri, ostraca, and objects in wood

[35] Torp 1965; Clédat 1999. [36] One example is Clackson 2000. [37] Buschhausen et al. 1993.
[38] Martin 1971. [39] Grossmann 1993: 171–203 and pls. 12–16; 1986.
[40] J. Clédat, E. Chassinat, Ch. Palanque, and J. Maspero led soundings and excavations at the site between 1900 and 1913.
[41] Clédat posited that the monastic settlement was built atop a necropolis, but Maspero later disputed this claim in the publication of the excavation (Maspero 1931–43: v). Currently, scholars acknowledge that Bawit is not positioned near an ancient sacred centre such as was the Monastery of Jeremias at Saqqara. However, the settlement is located between a necropolis and the Nile where villages once stood.
[42] Sauneron and Jacquet 1972; Jacquet 1979.

or metal. There is no sign of physical destruction or conflagration at any of the residences.

The northern sections of the dwellings are identified as 'oratories', and were accessed from the courtyard. Two windows provided light to the room, which contained a painted niche on the eastern wall.[43] This apse-like feature was decorated with a cross or with Christian motifs and served as a focal point for the entire room. In some cases, secondary oratories, with accompanying sleeping quarters, were attached to the main court.

The wall paintings and the inscriptions found within these hermitages parallel the types of iconography one would expect in monastic space: peacocks, images of saints, prayers of invocation, and statements of prayer. While the compositions here are not as elaborate, or in many cases as well designed, as those found at the larger sites of Bawit and Kellia, the fact that the central eastern niche is the focal point of the activity of prayer in these dwellings is unquestionable. For example, one can plot the inscriptions and the crosses painted on the walls of these hermitages on a plan to illustrate how the inhabitants marked their sacred spaces by lining the pathways to the oratories where there was a preponderance of crosses and invocations.

Esna's settlement has three characteristics that illustrate its uniqueness compared to other monastic settlements. First, the physical design of the cells as partially subterranean exhibits a sophisticated understanding of the environment and a desire to utilize the natural terrain for building. Thus far, Esna is the only known example of a small-sized community that chose this style of building. Second, Esna differs from other sites in that the dwellings were all constructed following a particular plan that was only infrequently altered. The buildings follow an architectural model, if not a blueprint, for monastic living. Third, the site was relatively short-lived when compared with the great monastic centres. The excavators concluded from ceramic and epigraphic evidence that the site was established early in the fifth century and was abandoned in the middle of the seventh century if not earlier.

THE EVOLUTION OF MONASTIC ARCHITECTURE

The importance of a physical space for spiritual living was already a component of religious thought in Egypt prior to the phenomenon of monasticism. In the first century AD, the members of the Egyptian pharaonic

[43] These windows appear later at Bawit (e.g., Chapelle LIV in Clédat 1999, 141).

priesthood, who resided in small dwellings in the temples,[44] and the Jewish ascetic community called the Therapeutae, who lived south of Alexandria, recognized that inhabiting particular spaces for practising asceticism would better aid an individual in the pursuit of the holy. For example, the Therapeutae chose to live in two-roomed dwellings with a solitary room, called a monastery, where they prayed and recited scripture alone.[45] They chose areas removed from the disturbances and turmoil of urban living.[46] Philo explains that the layout of the settlement created a spiritual balance between two characteristics for successful living: the dwellings were separated enough to provide a sense of solitude and yet they were close enough to foster a sense of fellowship among the participants.[47] The social space of the Therapeutae therefore created a physical symmetry with the intellectual ideals of how one should live a life dedicated to contemplation, the act of seeing the divine.[48] Unlike the Egyptian pharaonic priesthood and the Therapeutae, the Christian ascetics were the first to establish long-lasting settlements, and these became self-sustaining and important components of late antique, Byzantine, and Islamic Egypt.[49]

According to the narrative accounts, Egyptian monks constructed cells from the same materials available in antiquity that are used today in Egypt: limestone mortar, wood, mud, and water. Abba Or of the Thebaid was reportedly so popular that he needed periodically to help his visitors build cells to stay in, and those structures were built in a day.[50] Like Or, Ammonius also oversaw the construction of new cells: 'If there were many who came to him wishing to be saved, he called together the whole community, and giving bricks to one, and water to another, completed the new cells in a single day.'[51] Such cells were likely modified with time according to the needs of the individual. Cells made of mudbricks could be constructed quickly, but those made of stone or a combination of materials were built over a longer period. Certainly the settlements at Kellia, Bawit, or Esna

[44] The *w'b* priests in particular were known for spending selected periods of time away from the temple during which others anticipated that the gods might speak to the priest.

[45] The parallels between the two groups were commented upon by the church historian Eusebius, who went so far as to consider the Therapeutae a Christian community: Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2.16–17.

[46] Philo, *On the Contemplative Life* 18–20.

[47] *On the Contemplative Life* 24.

[48] *On the Contemplative Life* 24.

[49] Physical evidence for Philo's Therapeutae has not been found, and there is little evidence for other Jewish ascetic communities elsewhere in Egypt.

[50] *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 2.11: 'When a large number of monks came to him, he called together everybody who lived near him and built cells for them in a single day, one delivering mortar, another bricks, another drawing water, and another cutting wood.'

[51] *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 20.10–11.

were not built in a day. Their site plans suggest well-planned visions for the division of private and public space, for oratories and kitchens, and for accommodations for visitors.

As more men and women were drawn to the ascetic life in the Mediterranean world, it became clear that remaining within the late antique city hindered the ability of these individuals to train themselves properly for the contemplative life. If they wished to adopt any of a range of proper practices for living a holy life they needed to remove themselves physically from the communities that served as distractions to their spiritual work.[52] The temporary shelters described in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* would not suffice for the long-term commitments of new members or for the larger numbers of visitors that would mark the communities of the sixth and seventh centuries. The preferred environment for monastic dwellings was frequently identified as the desert or an abandoned area. This desert was to become an important spiritual realm in Christian theological topography for early monastics and those who made pilgrimages to them. The realization that they could find, or build, spaces more suitable to their purposes motivated Egyptian monastics to move outside of the city to new sites dedicated to living the ascetic life.[53] The desire to move from the inhabited villages and towns to self-designed contemplative centres was motivated by what I would call a monastic *relocation imperative*.[54]

The paradigm of relocation and associated development of monastic space can be applied to all of the sites I presented. Building in the desert, as described in the literary sources, should not be understood as living in the remote Sahara or Libyan desert; as we have seen, very few monks established their dwellings in such settings; they preferred to build monastic towns or villages that were, for the most part, very much a *part of* the world rather than *apart* from the world.

How was monastic space selected or constructed? And what characteristics did the monks believe were inherent in these structures that would enable them to see God? These questions become particularly important

[52] Brown 1988: 26–32. Brown explains that sexual renunciation, as a component of asceticism, had the ability to transform the body and free it from the power of the city over the individual. Some monastics did elect to live in the heart of the cities; however, the majority moved to the borders of towns and cities rather than remaining in the area that created so many temptations and distractions from their ascetic goals.

[53] Goehring 1993.

[54] *Relocation imperative* is a heuristic paradigm I have constructed to articulate the motivation behind moving between old and new locations without using a more negatively imbued expression. This concept provides the flexibility to consider the range of motivations for individuals to adopt the ascetic life, from those who sought the religious dedication to God to those who saw monasticism as a more secure mode of living than what was already available to them.

when we see that the types of places occupied by those seeking an ascetic life were not uniform. Although several sites contained dwelling areas, places for worship and prayer, kitchens, and rooms for visitors or novices, the execution and design of these specific spaces varied enough to suggest that there was a discernable difference in ascetic practice between those who resided at one site such as Kellia, and those who lived at another such as at Naqlun or in the Theban hills.[55] Despite this variation, the objective was the same in all locations: to see the face of God in continual prayer.

The material culture of these monastic sites contains clues of the ways in which monastics consciously built spaces to meet their spiritual needs in Byzantine Egypt. By moving to new locations, the monks created new identities, not based upon familial affiliation, but based upon their citizenship as sons and brothers of heaven. By remapping the settled world through their new habitations, the monks constructed locations that they, and others, perceived as intersections between heaven and earth.[56] The monastic dwellings, occupied by these divine architects, were gateways for others to experience God, thereby suggesting that one could consistently see the divine in these sacred spaces (**Fig.** 18.8).

Does the diversity of monastic settlement illustrate different forms of Egyptian asceticism or an evolution of architectural planning or other factors that shape the variation in the archaeological record? Egyptian monastic practice is frequently categorized by the dichotomous forms of monasticism drawn from the eremitical life of Antony and the coenobitic life of Pachomius. These two forms of asceticism incorrectly imply that the physical structures might also be easily divided into enclosed communal settlements and solitary dwellings for eremitical living. The sites described above present a wide array of dwellings that do not immediately allow for an obvious typology of settlement design. Rather than place the sites into an evolutionary model of development from simple and solitary spaces to more complex and communal, we should recognize the concurrent occupation of these sites with their very different site plans and expressions of how to construct ascetic space. It is all the more extraordinary that the inhabitants of the sixth and seventh centuries elected to design the sites that departed radically from each other in examples such as Bawit from Deir el-Dik or Esna and Saqqara.

In Byzantine Egypt, several settlement plans were employed to create new cities in the desert for ascetics. The layout of any community as a whole

[55] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetic Collection, Bessarion 10. Other sayings underscore the importance of resisting comparisons between the *askêsis* of one monk and another.

[56] See Frank 1998.

Figure 18.8 Wall painting fragments from John the Little's Monastery in Wadi an-Natrun; photo Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom.

does not lend itself easily to a formula for site planning. Yet even within the monastic communities we can recognize spaces for spiritual work through the inclusion of paintings and inscriptions that mark those areas as places for spiritual work. Regional preferences may yet be shown to affect these choices, as we can observe similarities between the architecture at Kellia and Wadi an-Natrun in the north-west Delta. Likewise, parallels are observable between the large area of Bawit and the comparatively smaller Abu Fano with the use of Graeco-Roman architectural elements. The fact that a predictable pattern of construction and design is elusive for the Byzantine era suggests that there was a greater latitude in settlement practices.

While the literary evidence does create a somewhat shadowy portrait of monastic settlement patterns, some sayings allude to the concerns monastics had with proper location, dependence upon those sites, and pride in one's dwelling. For example, Abba Zeno warned: 'Do not live in a famous place, do not settle close to a man with a great name, and do not lay foundations for building yourself a cell one day.'[57] This statement and the writings of John Cassian and Paul of Tamma capture an ascetic ethos that would be embraced by several generations both within Egypt and in the

[57] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetic Collection, Zeno 1.

Mediterranean world. Such writings would shape the ideal monastic reality of complete renunciation. The archaeological remains, as represented by the painted cells, the multi-room dwellings, and the luxury of everyday items (e.g., glassware, ceramics, literary texts, food) belie the view that asceticism was a total renunciation of the world in which monks lived as paupers and had no concern for themselves or others.[58] These sources, along with the documentary evidence, are a corrective to the literary portrait of monastic living. Monastic dwelling places were social spaces, defined by the relationship that the ascetic practitioners had with each other in the common goal of asceticism; it was, as Lefebvre might argue, a space that was transformed by such ideas from a residence to sacralized space in which the 'wise man in his cell' became the altar and incense of God.

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[58] See James Goehring's discussion in Chapter 19 below; Bagnall 2001.

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CHAPTER 19

Monasticism in Byzantine Egypt: Continuity and memory

James E. Goehring

When I sat as a graduate student in December 1976 among the ruins of the great fifth-century Pachomian basilica at Pbow, I marvelled at its size and imagined its original grandeur. A thirteenth-century account attributed to the Armenian Abu Salih had described the church as large and spacious, measuring 150 cubits (225 ft) in length by seventy-five cubits in width (112.5 ft). He reported that it contained pillars of marble and pictures composed of gilded and coloured glass tesserae.[1] Although our excavations of the site had revealed nothing of Abu Salih's tesserae, they did confirm the other elements in his report.[2] The basilica, dedicated in AD 459,[3] measured some 76 m in length (249 ft) by 37 m in width (121.5 ft). Four rows of massive rose granite columns created a standard five-aisle interior connecting the apse situated to the east with the return aisle at the west end of the church. A flooring composed of thick, uneven limestone pavers[4] set off the rose-coloured columns. Fragments of decorated stone unearthed in the course of the excavations[5] added to the sense of beauty and splendour that the intact basilica surely aroused among the members of the community and its visitors. Its construction had required considerable wealth, technical skill, and organization.

My interest in the Pachomian movement had just begun, but already a building that seemed somehow at odds with the relative simplicity of the early Pachomians and the smaller scale of things suggested in their literary

[1] Salih 1895: 281–2.

[2] No final report was ever written. For the excavation reports for the various seasons of work on the Pachomian basilica, see van Elderen and Robinson 1977: 36–54 = *Göttingen Miszellen* 24 (1977) 57–71; van Elderen 1979 (= Third Season); Grossmann 1979 (= Third Season); Lease 1980 (= Fourth Season); Grossmann 1987 (= Fifth Season); Grossmann and Lease 1990 (= Sixth Season). For more general final summaries, see Lease 1991; Grossmann 1981.

[3] Van Lantschoot 1934: 13–56.

[4] The pavers measured approximately 25 to 35 cm^2 (9.84 to 13.78 in^2).

[5] A black and white photograph of one such piece appears in the *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979) 233.

dossier raised questions about changes in that movement. The only mention of a church at Pbow in the various *Lives of Pachomius* occurs in the fifth Sahidic version and its Bohairic parallel, where, in the description of the founding of Pbow, the author reports that Pachomius built a small room used for celebration.[6] An account of the building of an oratory preserved in the *Paralipomena*, which may or may not refer to the same structure, offered an additional challenge to the beauty and grandeur of the great basilica.[7] It reports that, after building the oratory with porticos and pillars of brick, Pachomius interpreted the pleasure he derived from its beauty as the work of the devil. To counter the temptation, he instructed the brothers to tie ropes to the pillars and pull them out of alignment, so as to destroy the structure's symmetrical beauty. He then proceeded to explain to the brothers: 'I pray you, brothers, do not make great efforts to adorn the work of your hands. But whatever may enter into the work of each one of you by the grace of Christ and from his gift, take great care that your mind may not stumble through the praise given to the art and become prey to the devil.'[8]

It was this passage in particular that I reflected on as I sat amid the ruins of the great basilica. It seemed clear to me then that something had changed, a shift in perspective within the movement brought on by years of expansion and material prosperity. It was easy to imagine that the concerns expressed in the episode in the *Paralipomena* had somehow been lost, that success had somehow led the Pachomians away from the ascetic ideals that drove and defined the movement in its early years. The apparent shift that I noted on that occasion finds, in fact, various parallels when one compares the early literary image, born of Athanasius' *Life of Antony*, of a withdrawn and renunciatory desert asceticism with the movement coming into focus through newer archaeological and papyrological evidence for the later Byzantine period and beyond.

Judged from the perspective of the myth of the desert, in fact, Egyptian monasticism in the Byzantine era appears to balance rather precariously between its continuity with the past and the changes brought on by its expansion and material success. While the eremitic, semi-eremitic,

[6] Fifth Sahidic Life of Pachomius (S^5) 49. Lefort 1265: 144.16–17. Translated by Lefort 1943: 246 as 'la petite salle de fête'. For the Bohairic version (*Bo* 49) see Lefort 1925: 51.21–2; Lefort 1943: 116; Veilleux 1980: 71. See the brief discussion in Grossmann and Lease 1990: 11 n. 7. S^5 25 (Lefort 1943: 236–7) reports the building of a church in the monastery of Tabennesi when the brothers came to number one hundred. In the Bohairic (*Bo* 25) and First Greek (G^1 29) versions, the church in Tabennesi is built for the villagers or shepherds (Lefort 1925: 24.3–7; 1943: 95–6; Halkin 1932: 19.6–9; Veilleux 1980: 47, 316).

[7] *Paralipomena* 32; Halkin 1932: 157–8; Veilleux 1981: 55–6.

[8] Translation from Veilleux.

and communal lifestyles continue as the primary forms of ascetic life,[9] by almost any measure, the power, wealth, and prestige embodied in many of the monasteries, of whatever sort, seem to increase their presence in the very world that the myth of the desert taught the monks to flee. In the Byzantine world, Athanasius' linkage of Antony's ascetic prowess with his increasingly remote withdrawal into the desert was read in the context of monks and monasteries located in the cities, towns, and villages of Egypt, and in their adjacent desert spaces.[10] The ascetic ideal of poverty, embraced frequently and often absolutely in the early literary sources, had to make sense to monks who rented, owned, and sold their own monastic cells, many of which were elaborate, well-decorated, and well-furnished structures indicative of the relative wealth of their owners.[11] It had to be taught and interpreted within monasteries that had become complex estates with extensive landholdings worked through a system of tenant farming. The account of Apa Serapion who, following the gospel precept, sold his only possession, a gospel, and gave the proceeds to the poor, had now to be read in communities with an elaborate book culture that produced and gathered extensive libraries.[12] The demand to leave behind one's family that animates many an early ascetic call had now to accommodate family-owned monasteries where older family members retired into the community, while others still in the world negotiated the monastery's economic and legal affairs.[13] Warnings of the dangers of clerical office were now heard in a context that included monastic clerics, bishops, and archbishops, and where ascetics were intimately involved in the ecclesiastical politics of the day.[14]

In the following pages, I will focus on the issue of poverty and property as it appears in the sources and argue that while much changed in the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, the changes reflect for the most part a natural process dependent on the movement's success and increasing integration into the emerging Christian culture. While these changes altered the shape of Egyptian monasticism in various ways, I do not think that

[9] Any clear dividing line between the types, however, becomes increasingly obscure as one examines the evidence more closely and/or traces the developing patterns over time. The hermitages at Kellia, for example, become very large and can house numerous individuals. So too Shenoute ran his community, the White Monastery, from a desert cell located outside of it. See Layton 2002: 27–8; Emmel 2004: 560.

[10] Wipszycka 1994: 1–44.

[11] Gascou 1991; Bagnall 2001: 7–24.

[12] H. Rosweyde, *Vitae Patrum* III.70 (*PL* 73: 772–3); English translation in Waddell 1957: 140; cf. *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Theodore of Pherme 1 (*PG* 65.188A). For an example of the scope of later monastic libraries, Orlandi 2002: 211–31. See also Frankfurter 1998, chapter 6.

[13] See the various discussions in MacCoull 1988. For the issue of family in the monastic world, see also Rousseau 1972: 135–44; Krawiec 2003: 283–307.

[14] See Wipszycka 1996: 135–66.

they represent the result of some dramatic shift in ascetic mentality.[15] The sharpness of the divide is rather more apparent than real. It represents a perspective created through the combination of the movement's natural growth from its simpler past and the purposeful shaping of the memory of its past. Once the veil of the desert myth is raised, the roots of many of the changes are seen to extend back to the beginnings of the movement.[16] It is important to emphasize in this discussion that I do not view the myth of the desert as a static product of the early years against which one can measure the movement's change. The myth and the movement existed rather in a dynamic dialectical relationship with one another. As the myth continued to inform and shape the movement, so the movement continued to augment and develop the myth.

The myth finds primary expression and continuing support in the early and well-known literary sources; namely, the *Life of Antony*, the various collections of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the *Life* and *Rule of Pachomius*, the *History of the Monks in Egypt*, and the *Lausiac History*.[17] These sources divided the movement neatly into eremitic (*Life of Antony*), semi-eremitic (*Apophthegmata Patrum*), and coenobitic (*Life* and *Rule of Pachomius*) forms. They defined the ascetic life in terms of the practitioners' withdrawal (*anachôrêsis*) from the world and renunciation (*apotaxis*) of traditional social obligations. Spatial distance from the *oikoumenê*, effected by means of an intervening desert space or monastic wall, and social distance, achieved through the rejection of traditional family, property, and social ties, came to define the ascetic life. The early sources, seemingly less tendentious than their later counterparts, supplied the positivistic basis for the interpretation of later materials and the reconstruction of the movement's history over time.[18] They worked together to fashion the story of Egyptian asceticism into an influential and enduring myth of the desert.[19]

As presented in these sources, the wilful poverty of the ascetic, often expressed in absolute terms, becomes a defining element of ascetic perfection. The physical renunciation of property and wealth, like the spatial separation of the ascetic in the desert, afforded the storyteller the means to make tangible the spiritual goals of the ascetic life, to impart power to the

[15] Cf. Wipszycka 1995: 76–7.

[16] I have argued elsewhere, for example, that the myth of the desert tends to draw even non-desert ascetics into its presentation of the desert movement: Goehring 1993; 1996; 1999b.

[17] The texts written or translated into Greek and Latin defined Egyptian monasticism and its use of the myth of the desert through the centuries. Chitty's failure to even mention Shenoute in his classic work bears evidence of their continuing influence: Chitty 1966.

[18] See, for example, Wipszycka's discussion of the earlier use of archaeology in Wipszycka 1995: 64.

[19] Goehring 2003: 437–51.

story and myth. When Athanasius joins Antony's decision to embrace the ascetic life with his hearing of Jesus' words from the Gospel of Matthew 19:21, 'If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven', he effectively binds ascetic perfection with the literal fulfillment of the gospel command.[20] While Antony goes on to complete the process of perfection by withdrawing further and further into the desert, the path begins with the complete disposal of his inheritance. As Athanasius tells the story, in fact, 'attachment to wealth and property constitutes the greatest obstacle to Antony's withdrawal'.[21] When Antony responds to the gospel precept to sell all that he has, for example, he initially reserves a small amount to use for the care of his sister. In the *Life*, it is immediately recognized as an obstacle to his call. When he hears the words of the gospel, 'do not be anxious for tomorrow', he disposes of the remaining portion of his inheritance and places his sister in the care of trusted virgins.[22] The temptation, however, continues. A silver dish and gold appear in his path to the wilderness, a demonic effort to turn him back by reminding him of the wealth he left behind.[23] Even in the desert, the temptation endures. 'How many times', he tells his disciples, 'he [a demon] presented the illusion of gold to me in the wilderness, in hopes that I would just touch and gaze on it! But I sang psalms in resistance to him, and he melted away.'[24] In Athanasius' rendering of Antony's life, the physical renunciation of property and wealth becomes an essential condition of the ascetic life.

Numerous accounts in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* affirm the centrality of such renunciation.[25] Apa Megethios, we are told, 'owned nothing in this world, except a knife' that he used to cut reeds, with which to weave baskets to exchange for food.[26] In an apophthegm of Antony, we learn of a brother who, unlike Antony in the *Vita*, held back a little of his wealth to cover personal expenses. Antony instructs him to cover his naked body with fresh meat, and when dogs savage him, he tells him that 'those who renounce the world but want to keep something for themselves are torn in this way by demons who make war on them'.[27] The message is clear.

[20] *Vita Antonii* 2; Bartelink 1994: 132–3; Gregg 1980: 31. Matthew 19:21 = RSV translation.
[21] Brakke 1995: 233. The following draws on Brakke's overall discussion of the issue (233–8).
[22] *Vita Antonii* 3; Bartelink 1994: 134–9; Gregg 1980: 31–2. Matthew 6:34 = RSV translation.
[23] *Vita Antonii* 11–12; Bartelink 1994: 164–9; Gregg 1980: 39–41.
[24] *Vita Antonii* 40; Bartelink 1994: 242–5; Gregg 1980: 61–2. Translation from Gregg.
[25] Burton-Christie 1993: 217–19.
[26] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Megethios 1 (*PG* 65: 300D); Ward 1975: 126. Translation from Ward.
[27] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Antony 20 (*PG* 65: 81C); Ward 1975: 4. Translation from Ward.

In another story, we learn that Arsenius, who came from a senatorial family, had as a monk nothing with which to buy even a scrap of linen.[28] He had apparently disposed of all his wealth. When later offered a large inheritance from a recently deceased family member, he rejected it with the words: 'But I was dead long before this senator who has just died.'[29] In another story, a brother asks an older monk what he must do to be saved. The old ascetic strips off his tunic, girds up his loins, raises his hands to heaven, and says: 'This is how a monk should be, stripped of all the material things of this life and crucified.'[30]

While the communal nature of the Pachomian system led to its acquisition of considerable property and wealth over the years, the sources continue to treat material possessions as suspect. Property belonged to the community rather than the individual, and it was tightly controlled. The first Greek *Life of Pachomius*, for example, reports that surplus clothing remained under lock and key. It was brought out and used only briefly by the brothers when they laundered their clothing, so that they might have something to wear until the wash was done.[31] Individual monks had 'no money, still less anything of gold'. We are told, in fact, that 'some of them died having never known such things'.[32] In the early years, poverty was real. In one story, we learn that 'the brothers grew sad as death over their poverty' because the monastery had run out of wheat.[33] The Greek version of events reports that the crisis arose because the brothers 'used to give away in alms whatever they had'.[34] In later years, when the community's acquired wealth guaranteed basic needs, the sources report concern over the impact of such success on the ascetic life. Pachomius' forceful misaligning of the pillars in the community's new oratory, noted above, offers a case in point. Theodore's distress over the problem posed by the community's increasing wealth offers another example. The Bohairic *Life of Pachomius* reports that 'when he [Theodore] observed that, owing to the excuse of needing food and other bodily needs, the monasteries had acquired numerous fields, animals, and boats – in a word, numerous possessions – he was deeply distressed. He felt certain that the feet of many had slipped from the right path because of material concerns and the empty cares of this

[28] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 21 (*PG* 65: 93A); Ward 1975: 10.
[29] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 29 (*PG* 65: 97B); Ward 1975: 12. Translation from Ward.
[30] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Anonymous Series, Nau 143. Nau 1908: 49; Burton-Christie 1993: 218.
[31] *G*[1] 59; Halkin 1932: 40–1; Veilleux 1980: 338–9. [32] Ibid. Translation from Veilleux.
[33] *Bo* 39; Lefort 1925: 41.13–14; Veilleux 1980: 62. Translation from Veilleux.
[34] *G*[1] 39; Halkin 1932: 24.7; Veilleux 1980: 324. Translation from Veilleux.

world.'[35] While the Pachomian community clearly became wealthy over time, the sources suggest that it continued to value the ideal of poverty and recognize the dangers inherent in wealth.

When one turns from the early literary sources to the material evidence of monks and monasteries in the Byzantine period, however, a decidedly different picture emerges. One finds that monks did not normally abandon their property when they entered the ascetic life or hand ownership of it over to the monastery they joined. There is good evidence, in fact, that many who entered the monastic life had previously led relatively comfortable existences in the world.[36] While some surely disposed of or reduced their property when they entered the ascetic life, many seem to have retained full control of it. An eighth-century application for admission to a monastery from Jeme, for example, is silent on the monk's renunciation of his property or the donation of it to the monastery in question, in obvious distinction to the normative practice in the Pachomian and Shenoutean systems.[37]

The documentary evidence suggests in fact that the latter pattern was the exception rather than the rule in Byzantine Egypt. Monks appear in such texts entering into a wide variety of contractual agreements.[38] They inherit, own, and trade property, including slaves.[39] They appear as creditors, selling and leasing dwellings and land. They own and trade their cells, and their names occur in public tax documents. Three sixth-century Greek texts from the Melitian Monastery of Labla in the district of Arsinoe, for example, record the inheritance and eventual sale of an individual cell. In the earliest text, the owner, a certain Aioulios, wills his cell to his cellmate Eulogios, who in the two later texts, having decided after Aioulios' death to move to an orthodox monastery, sells the cell in Labla to Melitian monks.[40] Eighth-century Coptic texts from the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit reveal the same pattern. Individual monks there owned and sold their own dwellings, which in this case passed to the monastery when they died.[41] In Aphrodite, the monk Psates of the Monastery of Apa Apollo donated a building yet to be constructed and two *nomismata* for the founding of a

[35] *Bo* 197; Lefort 1925: 191.19–26; Veilleux 1980: 244; cf. *G*[1] 146. Translation from Veilleux. In *Bo* 204, Theodore refuses to travel in one of the monastery's boats because he does not think that they should produce such things.

[36] Wipszycka 1995: 71–5. One assumes, of course, that many others who entered the ascetic life had considerably less property or wealth in the world.

[37] Crum 1939: 9–10; Krause 1958: 124. [38] Gascou 1991.

[39] *P.Köln* 157, a Greek text of 589, reports the emancipation of a slave by Victor of the Monastery of Macrobius.

[40] *SB* I 5174–5 and Trinity College Dublin Papyrus D 5: Sayce 1890: 131–44; McGing 1990: 67–94; Krause 1958: 136–74; Goehring 1997: 69–70 (repr. in Goehring 1999a: 204–5).

[41] Krause 1958; Wipszycka 1995: 71.

guest house (*xenodocheion*).[42] Monks could also leave property to persons outside of the monastery. A document dated 508 from Oxyrhynchos records the leasing of a milling and baking operation located in the Monastery of Apa Kopreous in the city's western desert by a certain Serena to Aurelius Apphouas and his son. Serena had in fact inherited the facility, which included three ovens, two mills, and a stone for crushing grain, from the monk Kopreous.[43] Among the Coptic papers of the sixth-century lawyer Dioskoros of Aphrodite, one similarly learns of a mother who, having inherited a monastic dwelling from a deceased relative, conditions her two minor sons' receipt of it on their entry into the monastic life.[44] Such evidence integrates the Egyptian monk much more closely into the broader social and legal framework of society than is normally suggested by the myth of the desert. The examples could easily be multiplied.

Archaeological excavations have likewise revealed that the cells in question were not always the simple dwellings suggested in the early literary accounts.[45] Monastic cells from the lauras of Esna, Kellia, and Naqlun indicate the considerable wealth of their owners. Their construction required the use of professional labour, and while some financial help may have come from individual lay supporters, it did not derive from church coffers (see chapter 18 above for a detailed discussion of monastic dwellings).[46]

Individual cells in Kellia were also often elaborately decorated. Rose-tinted mortar with dark red painted 'carpets' adorned many of the floors, and the walls were everywhere decorated with various designs, including crosses, Christ, saints, and monks, integral parts of the spiritual work of the monk (see chapter 20 below). Paintings also included columns and arches that set off doors and passageways, patterns designed to imitate expensive stone or relief work, and numerous flora and fauna, real and imaginary.[47] Beauty, similar to what one would expect to find in the home of a relatively well-to-do person in the world, thus surrounded the monk.

Pottery and textiles found in the excavations likewise indicate the presence of a well-to-do population.[48] In a discussion of furnishings uncovered in the hermitages at Naqlun, Ewa Wipszycka noted that the monks possessed quality ceramics, most of which were imported from North Africa.

[42] *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096; MacCoull 1988: 14. [43] *P.Oxy.* XVI 1890.

[44] *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67176r + P.Alex. inv. 689; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67353; MacCoull 1988: 36–43.

[45] A good review of the importance of the archaeological evidence can be found in Wipszycka 1995: 63–78.

[46] Ibid. 72.

[47] M. Rassart-Debergh, 'Des sables d'Égypte renaît un art chrétien', *Connaissances des arts* 382 (1983): 65; cited in Wipszycka 1995: 73–4, from which the description and quotation derive.

[48] Ibid., pls. 30–41.

These included plates, painted vases, and high quality *terra sigillata* ware. In addition, an impressive quantity of glass occurs, including large plates and fine drinking cups. Among the textiles, one finds some 'of very high quality: for example, extremely delicate fabrics, almost transparent, or very fine braided fabrics'.[49] Again the image that one gains is not one of the complete renunciation of the finer things in life. Cells were even designed to ease the burden of the weather. The sixth-century cells of the Esna laura, which must have taken months and required considerable skill to build, were designed to catch cool breezes from the valley and channel them into the chapel.[50]

Similar wealth and attention to detail is displayed, as we have seen, in the great basilica dedicated in the Pachomian community of Pbow in AD 459. Not all monasteries were of course as successful, but the documentary evidence underscores their general integration into the broader economic and legal world of Byzantine Egypt. In addition to the support offered by the monks' own labour, production, and trade efforts, wealth accumulated through the efforts of monastic patrons, including donations in the form of annual subsidies, cash, moveable property, and land.[51] Monasteries bought land, and they leased land to others.[52] Some became the equivalent of great estates, working their landholdings through a system of tenant farming, shipping produce in their own boats up and down the Nile.[53] The Monastery of Apa Shenoute controlled scattered agricultural lands around the village of Aphrodite and in the nomes of Panopolis, Hermopolis, and Antinoopolis, the last named area being some 150 km north of the White Monastery.[54] Land belonging to local and nearby monasteries accounts for a third of all land recorded in an early sixth-century land register from Aphrodite, and an eighth-century fiscal document indicates that taxes paid by the Monastery of Apa Jeremias in Saqqara were among the highest in the region.[55] While such evidence is certainly not indicative of the economic status of all monasteries in the Byzantine era, it does underscore the degree to which the image of poverty generated by the myth of the desert diverged from the actual situation of many a Byzantine monk, whether as an individual or as part of a community.[56]

[49] Wipszycka 1995: 72–3. [50] Sauneron et al. 1972: I.47, IV.20; cited in Brown 1988: 252.
[51] Gascou 1991: 1639–42.
[52] *P.Lond.* V 1686 (Aphrodite) records the sale of land to the Monastery of Sminos in the Panopolite (MacCoull 1988: 12); *P.Ross.Georg.* III 48 records the leasing of land from the Monastery of Apa Shenoute by a certain Fl. Phoibammon.
[53] Frend 1984: 45. [54] Gascou 1991: 1642. [55] Ibid.
[56] Sizeable libraries too underscore the wealth of certain communities. By the eleventh century, for example, the library of Shenoute's White Monastery included, by one estimate, at least 1,000 codices (Orlandi 2002: 225–7). Some of these had been produced in the community's own scriptorium, others had been commissioned elsewhere and donated to the monastery, and still others had been brought to the library from other libraries (ibid., 213). The wealth involved here becomes clear when one compares the 1,000-plus codices in the White Monastery's library with 'the largest western libraries of the same time, which seem to have kept 300 to 500 codices' (ibid., 225). While there is no clear evidence on the size of the library in the Byzantine period with which we are concerned here, it seems safe to assume that it must have already been quite large.

Given the evidence, there can be no doubt that the ascetic movement in Egypt experienced numerical expansion, increased material prosperity, and expanding societal integration in the course of the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. The large and ornate cells of Byzantine Kellia certainly seem distant from the imagined early sites of Antony's ascetic experiment, a deserted tomb near his village and a more distant vacant fortress. The wealthy monastic estates of the Byzantine period are likewise difficult to envision as the expected end product of a movement that began with the simple community founded by Pachomius at Tabennesi. The changes were indeed significant.

A review of the literary sources, however, suggests that the roots of the later developments reach back into the earlier period. While the myth of the desert fosters the image of the early monks as possessing no property, careful analysis suggests that such was not always the case. While individual and communal monastic wealth grew as the years and centuries passed, its presence did not represent something new. When read with an eye for such evidence and an awareness of rhetorical intent, the literary sources suggest as much.

A story in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* attributed to Isaac the priest of Kellia, for example, reports that a brother asked the lord (*kyrios*) of the field he was harvesting if he could eat an ear of wheat. The lord is astonished at the request, since, as he notes, the brother owns the field.[57] The point of the story is the conscientiousness of the monk, who, though he owns the field, works as a labourer in it and takes not even an ear of its grain without first asking. He behaves as though it were not his. The monk's ownership of the field functions in the story, of course, as a literary device. Whether factual or not, however, its existence in the story indicates that the monastic ownership of land was not outside of the ascetic imagination.

What intrigues me above all in this story, however, is not the evidence it supplies for the existence of private property in the monastic world, but

[57] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Isaac 4 (*PG* 65: 225A); cf. Poemen 22; Bagnall 2001: 20. In a similar fashion, while the above-cited story of Apa Serapion selling his gospel to give to the poor serves a didactic function, it also indicates that monks owned books, a fairly expensive commodity. *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Serapion 2 mentions a brother's window shelf full of books.

rather the way in which the author uses the property to underwrite the ascetic virtue of renunciation. Its existence in the story takes the monk's conscientiousness to a higher level. He did not have to ask permission to eat the ear of grain, but he did. As such, his ascetic detachment from his property is underscored. The conscientiousness is far greater than if he had not owned the land. His more difficult asceticism serves better literarily to encourage all monks, whether they own land or not, to detach themselves from the things of the world. The story suggests, in fact, that the ideal of poverty was not necessarily bound up with the notion of selling all that one had. It embraces as well the virtue of detachment, a less dramatic though in many ways more difficult form of renunciation.

I would suggest that, in a similar way, stories that posit an ascetic's absolute poverty were fashioned to instruct their readers in the dangers of private property and the need for detachment from it. As the image of the ascetic desert made visible the ascetic virtue of withdrawal, so the idea of the complete rejection of private property made visible the ascetic virtue of renunciation. Although some prospective monks surely gave up their property to varying degrees, I would argue that both the extent of the disposal and the degree of unanimity on the topic found in the early literary sources is in fact literary. The propertyless monk served as the ideal example of ascetic detachment. His story established the goal, which I suspect the average monk strove to meet, at least in part, by spiritually detaching from property that he or she continued to possess.

The example of Arsenius offers an interesting case in point. Probably born to a senatorial family in Rome, Arsenius received a classical education and rose to high office in the court of the emperor Theodosius I. He subsequently embraced the ascetic life, presumably around 390, and retired to the Egyptian desert of Sketis. There he became known for his strict ascetic regimen.[58] According to the *Apophthegmata*, his diet consisted of a single basket of bread per year,[59] supplemented by the occasional gift of fruit and vegetables.[60] He cut and wove palm leaves for his work, refusing to refresh the water in which they soaked more than once a year.[61] At night he went without sleep, catching a few winks in the morning.[62] More importantly for our purposes, he is portrayed as destitute, apparently, like Antony, having disposed of his former considerable wealth (see above 395).

[58] Regnault 1991.
[59] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 17 (*PG* 65: 92B); Ward 1975: 9.
[60] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 16, 19, 22 (*PG* 65: 92B, 92C, and 93A); Ward 1975: 9–10.
[61] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 18, 24 (*PG* 65: 92C and 93C); Ward 1975: 9–10.
[62] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Arsenius 14 (*PG* 65: 92A); Ward 1975: 9.

There are, however, some suggestions to the contrary. Most telling is an apophthegm found in the alphabetical collection under Arsenius' disciple Daniel:

> Abba Daniel said that when Abba Arsenius was at Scetis, there was a monk there who used to steal the possessions of the old men. Abba Arsenius took him into his cell in order to convert him and to give the old men some peace. He said to him, 'Everything you want I will get for you, only do not steal.' So he gave him gold, coins, clothes and everything he needed. But the brother began to steal again. So the old men, seeing that he had not stopped, drove him away saying, 'If there is a brother who commits a sin through weakness, one must bear it, but if he steals, drive him away, for it is harmful to his soul and troubles all those who live in the neighborhood.'[63]

Here Arsenius possesses gold, coins, clothing, and all that the errant monk might want. He does not appear to have physically disposed of his former wealth. How is one to square this account with the others? Given the two portraits, I would suggest, particularly in view of the non-literary evidence discussed above, that the depiction of retained wealth rings truer. The function of the *Apophthegmata* as a spiritual guide encouraging renunciation is served by Arsenius' portrayal as one who totally renounced his former wealth. One can more readily imagine the development of the stories in a direction that emphasized a greater and more thorough renunciation on his part than the later reinstating of wealth he had actually renounced to make a somewhat oblique ascetic point. I suspect that Arsenius' effective ascetic detachment from his property simply translated over time in story form into his physical abandonment of it.

Palladius' account of Isidoros of Alexandria, who spent his youth in the desert of Nitria, illustrates the same point. He continued to practise a strict ascetic regimen later as an elder in the church of Alexandria, where 'he wore no fine linen except for a headband . . . and neither bathed nor ate meat'.[64] In a later episode, however, we learn that while he was 'very rich and exceedingly generous, he made no will when on the point of death, and he left neither money nor property to his own virgin sisters, but rather entrusted them to Christ'.[65] Clearly, according to Palladius, Isidoros had not given up his inheritance when he embarked on the ascetic life in the mountain of Nitria. He remained, in fact, very rich.

[63] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Daniel 6 (*PG* 65: 225A); translation from Ward 1975: 44.
[64] *Historia Lausiaca* 1.2; Butler 1898: 2.15; translation from Meyer 1964: 31.
[65] *Historia Lausiaca* 1.4; Butler 1898: II.16; translation from Meyer 1964: 32.

Given the evidence of Arsenius and Isidoros, one might ask as well whether Antony's sale of his inheritance is in fact a literary construct. In the language of asceticism, renunciation is often imaged as a dying to the world. Recall that the monk Arsenius rejected a sizeable inheritance with the words: 'But I was dead long before this senator who has just died.' By fashioning Antony's ascetic call as a response to the gospel's demand to sell all that you have, Athanasius places his hero's death to the world at the very beginning of his ascetic life. He creates him as the perfect monk. In a similar fashion, Antony's sale of the final piece of his inheritance that leads to the entrusting of his sister to known virgins severs his monetary tie to his remaining family.[66] I would suggest that we must at least consider the possibility that Antony's complete renunciation of his wealth has more to do with Athanasius' rhetorical interests than with the historical Antony.

It has long been recognized that Athanasius shaped the figure of Antony to his own particular ends.[67] The well-known figure of Antony portrayed in Athanasius' *Life of Antony* differs in important ways from the Antony who emerges from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or the one discovered in the *Letters of Antony*.[68] If Samuel Rubenson's analysis of the *Letters* is correct, in fact, the traditional image of Antony, drawn from the *Life*, as unlettered must be discarded.[69] The Antony of the *Letters* 'was not', in Rubenson's words, 'the product of a native and naïve Coptic Biblicism unaffected by Greek thought'.[70] Although he was hardly trained as a philosopher or theologian, the *Letters* betray his general 'acquaintance with Greek philosophy and Origenist theology'. Rubenson's analysis leads him to conclude that in late third-century Egypt 'new religious movements such as monasticism were not the products of people on the margin of society, but of intellectuals dissatisfied with what tradition had to offer'.[71] 'It becomes more difficult to imagine', he writes elsewhere, 'that the leading monks of the first generation were illiterate peasants; they were, rather, educated and prosperous leaders of a certain social standing. Their motive for leaving society behind and settling in isolation was not flight from oppression or fanaticism, but the result of a philosophical or religious quest combined with an aversion to the disruption occasioned by the worldly concerns of property, social

[66] Note the parallel with Palladius' account of Isidoros of Alexandria, who before his death entrusted his virgin sisters to Christ, leaving them neither money nor property. Palladius, of course, knew Athanasius' *Life of Antony. Historia Lausiaca* 8.6.

[67] See, for example, Dörries 1949: 357–410 (repr. in H. Dörries, *Wort und Stunde: Gesammelte Studien zur Kirchengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen 1966) I.145–224); Wipszycka 1990: 460–3.

[68] Brakke 1995: 203–16.

[69] Rubenson 1990 (repr. with an English translation of the *Letters of Antony* as Rubenson 1995a).

[70] Rubenson 1995a: 186. [71] Ibid., 187.

obligation, and the material side of the emerging church.'[72] Athanasius himself, in the *Life*, asserts that as a result of Antony's example 'many in the military service and many of the prosperous laid aside the burdens of life, and became monks from that point on'.[73]

If Athanasius fashioned his Antony as illiterate, might he not also have fashioned him as completely without property? If Antony did come from a relatively wealthy background with some degree of education, is it not more likely that, in embracing the ascetic life, he would have retained some of his wealth, as had Isidoros of Alexandria and probably Arsenius? It would support him in his new ascetic undertaking, while his asceticism would hold its disruptive qualities at bay. Ascetic perfection was acquired more realistically and effectively through mental and emotional detachment from property than through its complete elimination. In the myth of the desert, however, such detachment is more difficult to express and envision. Athanasius' portrayal of Antony's selling of all that he had so as to fulfill the gospel command and embrace absolute poverty paints a picture that everyone can easily see and grasp. It made visible the work of renunciatory detachment. Athanasius' portrait carried the day and absolute poverty became a basic element in the myth of the desert.

The point I wish to underscore is that the numerous propertied monks and monasteries encountered in the later documentary sources were not so fundamentally different from many of their ascetic ancestors.[74] The divide that seems to open between the early ascetic practitioners and the later Byzantine evidence depends to a significant degree on the idealization imposed on the early ascetics as part of a literary project that fashioned their lives as spiritual guides. I do not mean to suggest that all monks retained their pre-monastic wealth, or that wealth was not accumulated over time, or that it never corrupted ascetic performance. Increasing wealth likely led to increased difficulties and increased chances of failure. My point is only that such change occurred naturally over time. It corresponds with the growth and success of Christianity in general. One need not posit an identifiable shift in monastic mentality to explain it. While the ascetic world of Byzantine Egypt certainly differed from that of the first monks, in many ways it remained remarkably the same.

In closing, let me return to the size and beauty of the Pachomian community's great fifth-century basilica, which caused me to wonder if something

[72] Rubenson 1995b: 52. [73] *Vita Antonii* 87; Bartelink 1994: 358–9; translation from Gregg 1980: 94.

[74] This is not to deny that many who entered the monastic life gave up their property in varying degrees or were already poor when they entered. So too, I suspect, poorer monks and monasteries continued to exist in the Byzantine era.

had changed, a shift in perspective within the movement brought on by years of expansion and material prosperity. Subsequent archaeological work at the site of the basilica, however, has revealed two earlier basilicas located directly beneath the great fifth-century church. In each construction phase, the size of the basilica increased. The earliest church, tentatively dated to the period before Pachomius' death in 346, measured approximately 40 m in length by 24 m in width. The intermediate church, dated to the late fourth or early fifth century, measured 56 by 30 m, and the great basilica, completed in 459, measured 76 by 37 m. The growth kept pace with the expanding Pachomian *koinônia*. In his description of the earliest church, Gary Lease observed: 'Importantly, it would appear that the earliest church, as its two successors, was a five-aisle structure with a very narrow nave, thus indicating that this ground plan was the original form at Pbow. As in the later churches there were also rows of columns in the earliest church which ran along the eastern and probably the western sides.'[75] While the archaeologists' efforts note that the design and construction of the earliest basilica was more primitive,[76] as one would expect, the size and structural form indicate an interest in the community beyond that of mere function. While we cannot know what the inside looked like, one suspects that for its time and place, it too was beautiful.

The divide that I saw as a graduate student between the great fifth-century basilica and the story of the little oratory pulled out of alignment now seems less clear. While one certainly imagines that the later basilicas were increasingly better built and more beautiful, one suspects that the story's development moved the memory of the earlier church in the opposite direction to make its spiritual point. While the basis of the episode may in fact lie in its aetiological explanation for the dog-legged bend in the earliest basilica's northern wall,[77] the story uses the construction error to connect an ascetic concern over the dangers inherent in beauty to Pachomius himself and the primitive monastic past. The error becomes intentional, making visible the dangers of the current basilica's beauty to the monks who worship in it. The point is not to encourage monastic vandalism in support of ascetic goals, but rather to teach the reader to manage effectively the beauty that surrounds him, to use it to the glory of God, while avoiding the danger of letting it become an end in itself.[78] In the formulation of the

[75] Lease 1991: 6–7; for a complete bibliography of the excavations, see above n. 2.
[76] Ibid., 7. [77] Goehring 1999c: 185; Chitty 1966: 22.
[78] In this matter, the use of the story/saying in the monastic setting parallels the use of the gospel injunctions more generally.

story, however, a divide opens up between the more primitive past that it constructs and the reality of the present in which it exists. Change had of course occurred. It had in fact occurred simultaneously in two opposite directions. As the monastic movement became more complex and wealthier, its literary memory fashioned its past as simpler and more austere. As the later basilicas became in fact more ornate, the earliest basilica became in the imagination more primitive.

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CHAPTER 20

Depicting the kingdom of heaven: Paintings and monastic practice in early Byzantine Egypt[1]

Elizabeth S. Bolman

Writing in the fourth century, Evagrius Ponticus expresses the desire 'to see the perfect place of God',[2] and even 'to see the face of the Father in heaven'.[3] The ability to pray requires 'rendering the mind deaf and dumb', but significantly not blind.[4] Such passages privilege the sense of sight and suggest that God has a recognizable form. Beginning with number 66 in the *Chapters on Prayer*, Evagrius makes clear that this is in no way his intention.[5] 'When you are praying, do not form images of the Divine within yourself, nor allow your mind to be impressed with any form.'[6] And shortly thereafter: 'When the spirit prays purely without being led astray then the demons . . . suggest the semblance of God to it along with some form (*schêmatismon*) that is flattering to the senses . . .'[7]

The intensive prayer under discussion takes place in a carefully designed space, the monastic cell.[8] A common motif in Evagrius' and other ascetics' writings from Egypt is the construction of the cell as the primary site for the monk's spiritual work, and the insistence on maintaining this place free from distractions.[9] The *Apophthegmata Patrum* even include an account of a monk who uprooted his vegetable garden, in his zeal to avoid its corrupting influence.[10] The cell expresses, in material form, some of the ascetic

[1] I am grateful to Roger Bagnall for the invitation to contribute to the Dumbarton Oaks Spring Symposium of 2004, where I presented an early version of this paper. Derek Krueger, Daniel Caner, and Andrew Crislip all generously discussed aspects of this article with me. My thanks to Rodolphe Kasser and Marguerite Rassart-Debergh for permission to reproduce Kellia paintings.

[2] Evagrius Ponticus, *Chapters on Prayer* 27, 57 in Bamberger 1980: 59, 64. All future references to Evagrius' writings will refer to the Bamberger edition.

[3] Evagrius, *Chapters* 113; Bamberger 1980: 74. [4] Evagrius, *Chapters* 11; Bamberger 1980: 57.

[5] Clark 1992: 80.

[6] Evagrius *Chapters* 66; Bamberger 1980: 66. Sinkowicz 2003: 199. Stewart 2001: 191–2, 200 analyzes the rare occasions when Evagrius permits non-literal interpretations of visualizations.

[7] Evagrius *Chapters* 72; Bamberger 1980: 67.

[8] Brooks Hedstrom 2001; Torp 1981: 1–8. The oratory seems to have been for the use of a single monk, for prayer. However, Pierre Corboud 1986: 89 has suggested that many rooms were also, if less intensively, used for prayer, and also had a decorated eastern niche.

[9] Ward 1984: 2, 86; Budge 1907: II.321. [10] Arsenius 22, in Ward 1984: 12.

strategies and goals of the monastic inhabitant. Writing in the early fifth century about Egyptian monasticism, John Cassian recounts Abba Isaac's description of the ways in which the monk's soul is weighed down. These include the decision to build 'four or five cells . . . splendidly decorated . . .'[11] This reference to the decoration of the cell is unique, to my knowledge, and is emphatically critical. Such accounts build up an ideal monastic habitation that is dauntingly austere.

Evagrius was born in Pontos, lived in Constantinople and Palestine, and finally settled in the early monastic communities of the Egyptian desert, in the fourth century.[12] He knew Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and also Macarius the Great, and while, as an adherent of Origen, Evagrius may not have represented the majority view in Egypt, nevertheless he demonstrates the close ties that could exist between geographically distant ascetics in the early Byzantine period.[13] Although Basil the Great advocated the use of images of the saints as models of virtue,[14] and, during the Iconoclast controversy, monks were strong supporters of icons,[15] still the firmness of Evagrius' admonition to refrain from imagining God in discernable form seems to find a corollary in the sparsely adorned monastic habitations of the early Byzantine period, for example cells in the Holy Land. Some remnants of painted crosses have survived on the eastern wall of the hanging cave of Chariton, in the Judaean desert.[16] Oratories in the Great Lavra of the Monastery of St Sabas were occasionally adorned with mosaic floors.[17] Of course in the middle Byzantine period the elaborately decorated cell is no surprise; witness the Hermitage of St Neophytos on Cyprus, and the numerous Cappadocian cells. However, were we left only with the writings of the desert fathers and the physical remains outside of Egypt, we might well imagine the standard monastic habitation of the early Byzantine period to be visually as well as physically austere.

And yet, the copious material evidence of the monastic life surviving in Egypt from the sixth and seventh or eighth centuries contradicts this impression. Certainly, one can find cells with no images, or depictions of relatively simply drawn crosses, but a very large number of the oratories – the primary sites for spiritual work – are fabulously decorated.[18] Few painted

[11] John Cassian, *Conferences* 9.5; P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser. 2, vol. XI (Edinburgh 1890): 153, available at http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/.

[12] Bamberger 1980: xxviii, xlii–xliii. [13] Baldwin and Kazhdan 1991: 760–1.

[14] *PG* 32: 229A; cited in Cutler 1991. [15] Hollingsworth 1991. [16] Hirschfeld 1993: 300, fig. 5.

[17] Great Lavra Complex 27, Patrich 1995: 103, fig. 46. I am not considering the Pantocrator cave on Mount Latmos as being convincingly dateable to the seventh century.

[18] Rassart-Debergh 1986: 185. I consider the oratories those rooms in multi-roomed cells that include a prominent eastern niche, with paintings or inscriptions, suggesting a devotional purpose. Clédat

churches from this period in Egypt have survived, but painted oratories are another matter altogether, most notably found at Kellia, the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, and the Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara. The oratory is the space in the multi-roomed cell dedicated for prayer and is consistently more embellished than any other.[19] The men who painted the majority of these included skilled artists, and others who had at least some artistic training.[20] But the impulse to depict religious subjects and texts within the eremitic space compelled even some ascetics with no training in the visual arts, as hermitages at Esna and Abydos demonstrate.[21] Approximately sixty to eighty painted oratories survived to the beginning of the twentieth century, and as one scholar estimates that only 5 per cent of Bawit has been excavated, the potential exists for considerably more to be uncovered.[22] Their painted programmes include crosses, depictions of Christ, the Virgin Mary, angels, saints, monks, flora and fauna, rendered in bright colours.

Instead of identifying the paintings in these spaces, in the spirit of Apa Isaac, as 'splendid decoration', and as evidence of unsuccessful monks with heavy souls, I would rather see their large number as an indication that we should search for alternative explanations to account for their existence. Consideration of a very specific and complex monastic visuality, with a series of practical applications for the monk's spiritual development, resolves the apparent contradiction between the cell as a place free from distractions and the proliferation of lavish paintings in that most important of spaces.

The gaze, and historical constructions of sight, or visuality, have been the subject of an enormous body of scholarly work. A few of the many scholars engaging with this topic and also with our period are Georgia Frank, Robert Nelson, Gary Vikan, Herbert Kessler, and Jas Elsner, and their work has had a stimulating effect on my project.[23] It is my belief that a specific mode of visuality was constructed as a vital part of that most intensely artificial and carefully structured way of life, monasticism. This method of seeing taught the practitioner to use images as tools for his spiritual work in several ways. One essential goal was to learn to reverse

1904: VIII notes that he found but did not document chapels (what we now call cells) without images, objects, or graffiti at Bawit.

[19] Van Moorsel 1979: 412. Rassart-Debergh 1989: 59.

[20] I am deducing this from the quality of the paintings, and their iconographic consistency with paintings elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

[21] Petrie 1925: 20–6, pls. XLIX–LV; Sauneron et al. 1972: I.63–82.

[22] This number will increase with the forthcoming Kellia publications. See Rassart-Debergh 1981: 9–124, esp. 113–15. Torp states that only 5 per cent of Bawit has been excavated, without explanation: Torp 1981: 3.

[23] Frank 2000; 1998: 483–505; Nelson 2000: 143–68; Elsner 2000: 45–69; 1994: 81–102; Kessler 2000.

the normal order of the monk's sight, to ignore the world around him, in order to gaze at God. My primary textual sources for these exercises are the accounts of the monastic life in the Egyptian desert, composed beginning in the fourth century, that were disseminated, elaborated, and translated in the following centuries.[24] The paintings and the physical environments for monastic practice are also essential primary sources, and indeed provide us with significant data lacking in the texts. My exclusive focus here is the male monastic, because of the nature of the surviving textual and material evidence.

Before engaging with the images themselves and considering their functional rationales, I must say a few words about dating. No firm chronology has been established for Egyptian painting in late antiquity and the early Byzantine period. Few specific dates survive, and all too often the archaeological context has not been properly evaluated. As a result, I will be referring to paintings that are normally assigned to a span extending between the sixth and seventh, and more rarely eighth, century, without in most cases being more specific.[25] Something of a gap exists, therefore, between the writing of the main body of texts I am using and the creation of the paintings. I do not see this as an insurmountable problem, because the texts in question were read and copied in the monasteries where the somewhat later paintings were found.[26] Moreover, many of them were collected or edited only in the fifth century or even later.[27]

Numerous forms of ascetic living coexisted within equally diverse physical environments. Out of this multiplicity, one pattern that has emerged from the visual evidence is a strong preference at Kellia for paintings of crosses, coupled with a disinclination overall to depict figural subjects.[28] The earliest images from the first phase of ascetic living at Kellia in the fourth and fifth centuries are simple crosses.[29] These explode into multihued elaborations of the cross accompanied by flamboyant decorations, beginning in the sixth century. From the same period come the rare figural representations found at Kellia.[30]

The interior of a single oratory includes seventeen crosses, some of which are large and belong to the room's formal decoration, and others seem to

[24] Bagnall 2001: 18–19, 23.

[25] A graffito found in Bawit cell 17 includes a date that corresponds to AD 735. This graffito was on the second layer of painted plaster, suggesting a long period of use for the room. See Clédat 1904: 84–5.

[26] See n. 24 above.

[27] My thanks to Roger Bagnall for this observation.

[28] Rassart-Debergh 1987: 373–85. Most of what we know about Kellia paintings is due to the dedication of Rassart-Debergh.

[29] Rassart-Debergh 1989: 59. [30] Rassart-Debergh 1987: 374.

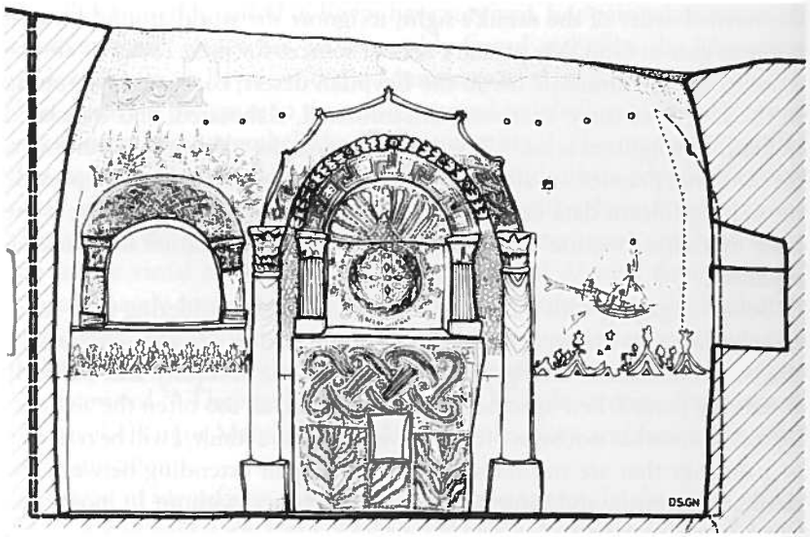

Figure 20.1 Eastern wall including painted cross in a wreath, Kellia (Qusur el-Izeila 19/20, room 15), line drawing; M. Rassart-Debergh, 'Choix de peintures', in *EK 8184* III (Louvain 1999), chapter 6.3, folding pl. II, fig. 135.

have been added later, to judge from their inexpert formation and placement (**Figs.** 20.1–4). This is room 15, hermitage 19/20, of Qusur el-Izeila, at Kellia.[31] The prominent cross in a victory wreath, set within the centrally placed and intensively decorated niche of the eastern wall, dominates the room. The major crosses on the eastern, western, and northern walls all include the fabulous vegetation that is regularly found at Kellia and lend themselves to a reading of the cross as the tree of life. Archaeological evidence has shown this room to date to the expansion of this complex in the first quarter of the seventh century.[32] Crosses were positioned in many locations at Kellia, for example around doors, but they appear with the greatest embellishment on the eastern walls of oratories. These walls usually have a centrally positioned niche and were the most densely painted, as is the case in room 15 (**Fig.** 20.1).[33] Why are the paintings here, in the space which should have been freest from distractions? The answer lies in the monks' work in the cell.

[31] Rassart-Debergh 1999a: 131–4, folding pl. II, figs. 134–7.
[32] Favre and Nogara 1999: 96, 102–3, pls. 17.1–4.
[33] Rassart-Debergh 1987: 374; 2004: 1472–3; Corboud 1986: 86.

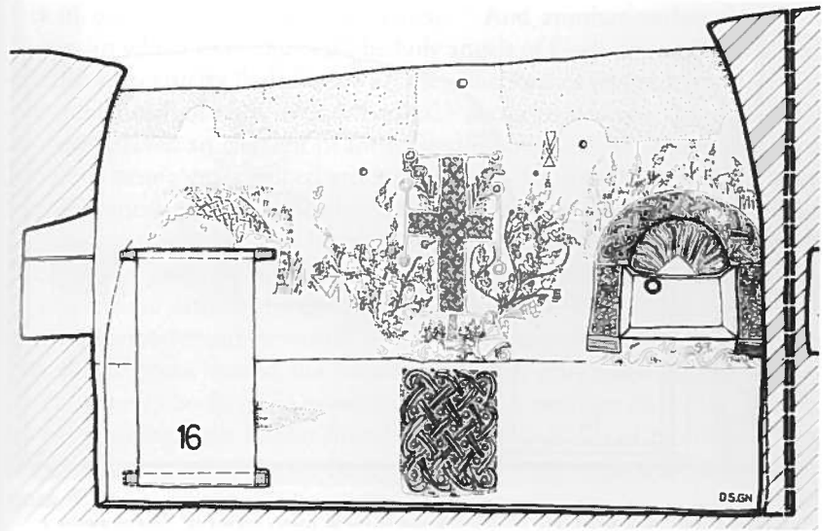

Figure 20.2 Western wall, Kellia (Qusur el-Izeila 19/20, room 15), line drawing; Rassart-Debergh, *EK 8184* III, folding pl. II, fig. 137.

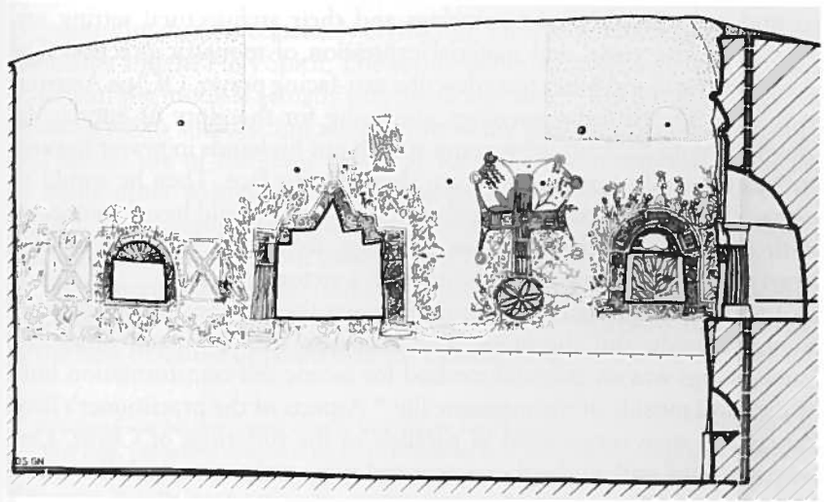

Figure 20.3 Northern wall, Kellia (Qusur el-Izeila 19/20, room 15), line drawing; Rassart-Debergh, *EK 8184* III, folding pl. II, fig. 134.

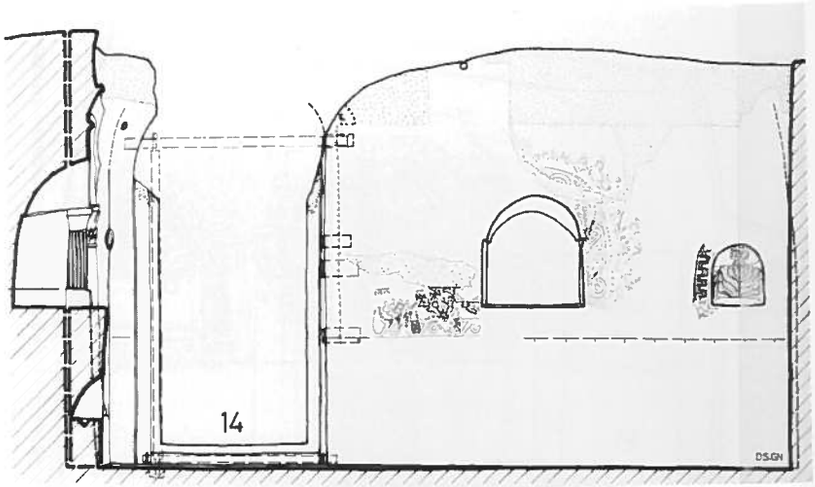

Figure 20.4 Southern wall, Kellia (Qusur el-Izeila 19/20, room 15), line drawing; Rassart-Debergh, *EK 8184* III, folding pl. II, fig. 136.

Some of the standard, ritualized, physical movements of the monastic body can be gleaned from the textual sources. Inscriptions also assist us in understanding how the paintings and their architectural setting are, in a sense, the visual and material expression of monastic practice. The *Apophthegmata* and other texts describe east-facing prayer. Of Apa Arsenius it is said: 'On Saturday evenings, preparing for the glory of Sunday, he would turn his back on the sun and stretch out his hands in prayer towards the heavens, till once again the sun shone on his face. Then he would sit down.'[34] The monk or monks who used this room would have been ringed with crosses and lush, paradisiacal foliage, facing the brightly coloured prayer niche at the east, with the cross in a victory wreath.

Textual and material evidence underscores the relationship between the monastic body and the cross. The imitation of Christ and other elevated beings was an essential method for ascetic self-transformation both within and outside of the monastic life.[35] Aspects of the practitioner's lived experience were constructed as parallels to the sufferings of Christ. One ascetic would walk under thorn trees and step on thorns, which 'he would endure . . . without removing them, remembering the nails piercing the

[34] Ward 1984: 14. Ritualized Christian prayer is undertaken facing east, the direction from which it is believed that Christ will come on the day of judgment: Guillaumont 1968: 311–12, 314.
[35] Bolman 1998: 65–77, pls. 1–7; 2001: 41–56.

feet of our Lord Jesus upon the Cross'.[36] And another author describes Sketis, 'in which were choirs of the holy angels of God, these being blessed monks, who crucify their flesh with the afflictions of virtue, carrying at all times the death of Jesus in their bodies'.[37] Evagrius describes the thin rope of the *analabos*, an element of formalized monastic dress that enabled the monk to wear a cross looped around his body.[38] A fourth- or fifth-century example survives from Akhmim (**Fig.** 20.5), which would have inscribed a cross (set at an angle) on both the front and back of the monk's body.[39] Wearing the *analabos*, and encircled by painted crosses, the monk in room 15 would have carried 'the death of Jesus' not only 'in . . . [his] body', but also on his body, and he would have seen it everywhere he looked, in the form of the cross. Indeed, the *analabos* was likely only one of several crosses on the monk's body, quite possibly including a pendant cross, and crosses on his clothing. Jean Clédat found a painting at Bawit of monks wearing mantles decorated with two large crosses, each comprised of five smaller ones.[40]

A basic requirement of the monastic life was ceaseless prayer. In one room at Kellia, fascinating evidence in the form of an inscription has survived suggesting the intersection of this practice, of the Jesus prayer, and of a painted cross.[41] The inscription, written on a wall in the cell, warns the ascetic reader to disregard demons. The demons in question will attempt to persuade him that, by ceaselessly crying out 'Lord Jesus', he is ignoring God the Father and the Holy Spirit. The author of the text asserts that, by praying to Christ, the monk is actually praying to all three.[42] The inscription dates between *c.* 650 and 750 and attests both to the goal of praying perpetually and to the use of the Jesus prayer at Kellia.[43] It also reminds us, as do so many other written sources, of the prevalence with which the battle against the passions and other distractions from prayer were personified, and thereby made visual, in this case as a fight against demons.

The eastern niche of the room with this inscription includes a jewelled cross which is made unique at Kellia and indeed in Egypt by the addition of the bust of Christ imposed over the crossing (**Fig.** 20.6).[44] This painting

[36] *S. Pachomii vita bohairice scripta* 16.23 in McDermott 1971: 306.
[37] *Life of Isaac, Patriarch of Alexandria* 312.6, in McDermott 1971: 316. Evagrius, *Chapters* 17; Bamberger 1980: 58. *Martyrium Sancti Apa Epime* 130.18, in McDermott 1971: 726, 728–30.
[38] Evagrius, *Praktikos*, introduction 13–14. Innemée 1992: 108, fig. 8.
[39] Oppenheim 1931: 213, fig. 71.
[40] Cell 12. Clédat 1904: 62, pl. XXXVI.
[41] Qusur al-Rubaiyat 219, room 12.
[42] Guillaumont 1968: 317.
[43] This type of *monologistos* prayer was known in Egypt, Sinai, and Gaza in the sixth and seventh centuries. See Guillaumont 1968: 318–19.
[44] Rassart-Debergh 1987: 375 and fig. 3; Guillaumont 1968: 314; Rassart-Debergh 2004: 1475.

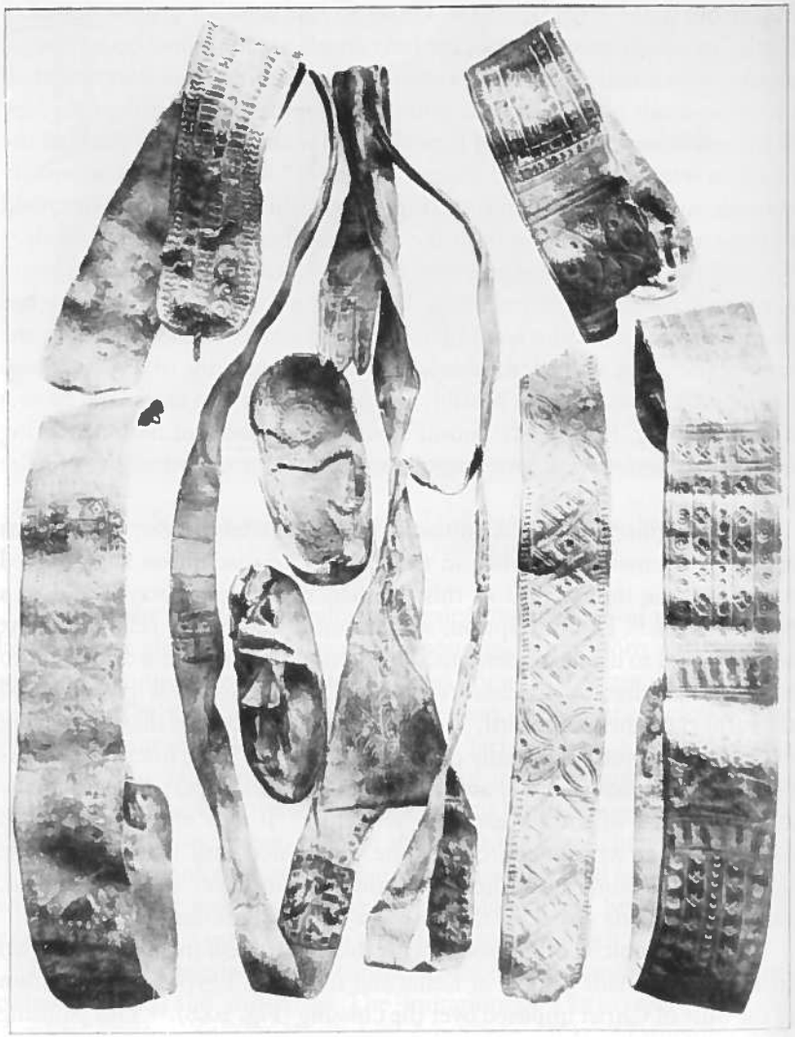

Figure 20.5 Monastic garb, including *analabos*, *c.* fourth–fifth century, Akhmim, now in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; P. Philippus Oppenheim, *Das Mönchskleid im Christlichen Altertum* (Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte 28 Supplementheft) (Freiburg 1931): 213, fig. 71.

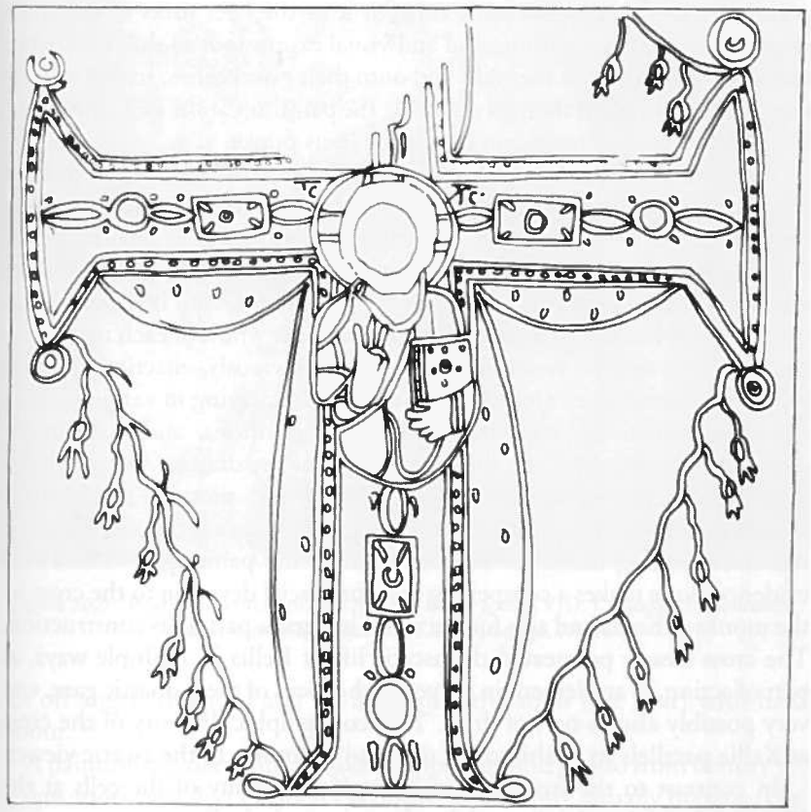

Figure 20.6 'Cross with bust of Christ', painting in niche, eastern wall, Kellia (Qusur al-Rubaiyat 219, room 12), drawing. M. Rassart-Debergh, 'Quelques croix kelliotes', in *Nubia et Oriens Christianus*, ed. Piotr O. Scholz and Reinhard Stempel (Cologne 1987) fig. 3; drawing Lenthéric.

integrates a sign of Christ with a depiction of him. The cross image has numerous points of reference, but a specific one for this cross type may have been not only the actual cross, but also the three-dimensional gold and gemmed cross sent by Theodosius II to Jerusalem in 420, and erected at Golgotha.[45] Whether or not the inscription described above and the

[45] Wilkinson 2002: 362. One type of sixth-century *ampulla* made for pilgrims to Jerusalem has close parallels to the Kellia cross, with a bust of Christ in a roundel, located at the crossing, but the cross in these examples is not jewelled. Grabar 1958: 55–7, pls. XXXIV–V. As Rassart-Debergh points out, the only precise parallel is found in later Nubian art: Rassart-Debergh 2004: 1475.

painting were done at the same time, at least the later users of the space enacted their prayers with textual and visual expressions of the dominance of Christ mapped onto the walls and onto their own bodies. In this setting, they likely positioned themselves facing the paintings at the east, and began the endless chain of recitation that is the Jesus prayer.

We tend to imagine prayer being undertaken with eyes closed, but, of course, as prayer is an artificial rather than a biologically natural practice, we should not limit ourselves to such assumptions. One account reads: the holy man 'went to his cell and he made a covenant before God that he would not sleep the whole night, nor bend his knees. And he dwelt in this cell for seven years. And he remained standing the whole of each night with his eyes open and he never closed them.'[46] Obviously, enacting ceaseless prayer week after week would eventually require praying in various places, facing all directions, assuming a variety of positions, and occasionally closing one's eyes. And yet, the conjunction of the oratory, the privileged position for prayer, and the dominant eastern pictorial programme suggests, to borrow a phrase from Elsner, that a 'ritual-centred visuality' was a motivating factor for the inclusion of the paintings.[47] The visual evidence alone makes a compelling case for special devotion to the cross by the monks at Kellia and also for the use of images as part of its construction. The cross clearly permeated the ascetic life at Kellia in multiple ways, as part of action, as an element in prayer, as the focus of the monastic gaze, and very possibly also as part of dress. The iconographic diversity of the cross at Kellia parallels its multifaceted uses and meanings to the ascetic viewer.

In contrast to the frequent crosses at Kellia, many of the cells at the Monasteries of Apa Apollo and Apa Jeremias include dense concentrations of figural paintings. Some of the subjects chosen for the cell give painted expression to the vivid metaphors found in the texts. At Bawit, a lion being hunted and indeed already pierced through the head with an arrow was painted in cell 12, and a bear was visible in cell 17 (**Fig.** 20.7).[48] Apa Poemen's response to the monk who was having trouble with anger and lust is to quote David, who said: 'I will pierce the lion and I will slay the bear' (1 Sam. 17:35). The monastic father interprets this as meaning: 'I will

[46] The Syriac *Book of Paradise* 268.14, in McDermott 1971: 303.

[47] Elsner 2000: 55. Elsner's 'ritual-centred visuality' is operative in the monastic cells, but with some key differences. *Mimêsis* is a tool for transformation and not, as it is in the Greek and Roman worlds, an illusionistic mode of representation.

[48] For a delightful interpretation of the chained lions painted at QR 233, see Rassart-Debergh 1989: 71, fig. 617. See also a graffito found at Kellia of a monk-like figure with a sword, attacking lions. *EK 8184* III, fig. 47, folding pl. 5.

Figure 20.7 'Bear', Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit (cell XVII); J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo 1904), pl. XLIX.

cut off anger [the lion] and I will crush fornication [the bear] with hard labour.'[49]

A painting of a deer with a snake wrapped around it, also from oratory 17, makes another of Apa Poemen's sayings continuously visually present (**Fig.** 20.8). He describes the monk as the hart who consumes and is burned by the venom of reptiles, in other words the evil of demons. The hart longs to drink from the 'flowing streams' described in Psalm 42:1, while the monk longs for 'the body and blood of the Lord', which will 'purify' him from the demonic venom.[50] According to this interpretation, the deer is the monk, struggling with a demon and yearning for the release that the Eucharist offers. This image of the battle with evil is located on the western wall, adjacent to a painting of the entrance to Hell. Other paintings of deer (hart) free of serpents are located elsewhere in the cell, as part of consistently sacred figural groupings.[51]

[49] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Poemen 115; Ward 1984: 184.

[50] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Poemen 30; Ward 1984: 171.

[51] Clédat 1904: pls. XLV, LI.

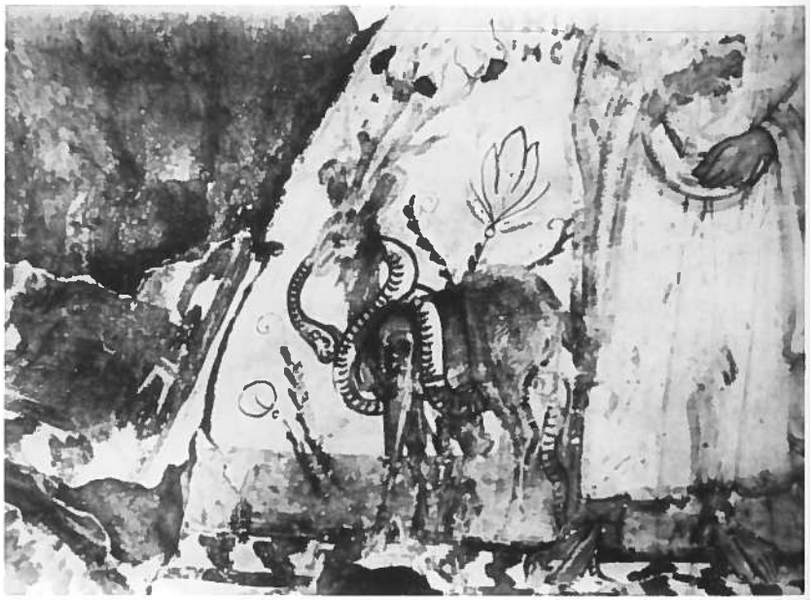

Figure 20.8 'Hart and Snake', Monastery of Apa Apollo, Bawit (cell XVII); Clédat, *Le monastère*, pl. XLIX.

Mimêsis as a tool for ascetic improvement and attainment of the ultimate goal of salvation is a staple of the Egyptian desert, and it was not only performed in the quest to become Christ-like, as discussed above. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, the monk attempted to imitate, and by so doing transform himself into, a host of superior beings and personifications, only a few of which I will discuss here.[52] These included his monastic forefathers, as is stated so succinctly in the introduction to the Alphabetical Series of the *Apophthegmata*: 'This book is an account of the virtuous asceticism and admirable way of life of the holy and blessed fathers. They are meant to inspire and instruct those who want to imitate (μίμησιν) their heavenly lives, so that they may make progress on the way that leads to the kingdom of heaven.'[53] Just as the accounts of the desert fathers functioned as tools for *mimêsis*, so also did their images. The paintings provided focal points for an early stage in the eventual goal of ascending the hierarchy to learn to imitate and assimilate to Christ. A painting found at Saqqara shows several famous monks, including Apa Apollo (**Fig.** 20.9). Apa Apollo was known

[52] Bolman 2001. [53] *Apophthegmata Patrum*, Alphabetical Series, Prologue. Ward 1984: xxxv.

Figure 20.9 'Monastic Saints', Monastery of Apa Jeremias at Saqqara (cell A, photograph at time of excavation). This painting, somewhat reduced, is now in the Coptic Museum, Cairo. Jean Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1906–1907)* (Cairo 1908), pl. XLIV.

for enacting miracles in imitation of Christ.[54] The painting maps out the mimetic hierarchy in visual form: the viewer and the monk in *proskynêsis* strive to imitate Apa Apollo, who himself has successfully imitated Christ. The crosses framing his head make Apollo's success visually apparent. An anchorite's cell found in Nubia includes texts of the *Apophthegmata* on the walls, in place of paintings of them.[55] Were all monks, like Evagrius, opposed to visualizing God in discernable form, we would likely have discovered more cells demonstrating this method of keeping the sayings of the fathers ever present. The models of the fathers could apparently be brought into the cell with images or with words, or both. These variations manifest the diversity of monastic practice and habitation.

The martyrs represent another stage in this monastic hierarchy. They are the spiritual ancestors of the monk and models for imitation.[56] Just as

[54] Bolman 1998: 69. [55] Griffith 1927: 81–91, pls. LXI–LXXIII. [56] Bolman 2001; 1998.

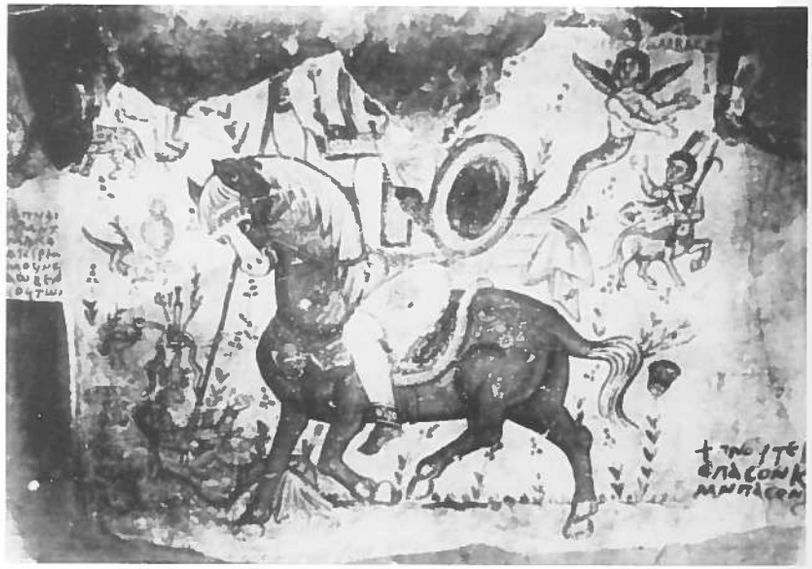

Figure 20.10 'St Sisinnius', Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit (cell XVII). Clédat, *Le monastère*, pl. LV.

the martyrs are the soldiers and athletes of Christ, so also are the monks, patterning themselves intentionally on their forerunners on the path to the kingdom of heaven.[57] The sufferings of the monks are a form of living martyrdom, and the death and baptism in blood of the martyr are echoed in the novice's ritual death to the world and rebirth as a monk, as he joins the monastery.[58] The martyr Sisinnius is shown in oratory 17 at Bawit, vanquishing evil beings (**Fig.** 20.10). Evagrius describes their likely meaning: 'When . . . the demons stimulate the irascible appetite they constrain us to walk along precipitous paths where they have us encounter armed men, poisonous snakes and man-eating beasts. We are filled with terror before such sights . . .'[59] The painting of Sisinnius has at least two possible roles, one mimetic and the other apotropaic. It seems likely to me that most, if not all, of these paintings were multivalent.[60] Other common models

[57] Cassian, *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia*, book 1, chapter 1, http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-11/Npnf2-11-35.htm#P1909_853692.
[58] Malone 1950: 122; Kavanagh 1993: 236 n. 2.
[59] Evagrius, *Praktikos* 54 and 11; Bamberger 1980: 31, 18.
[60] Iacobini 2000: 216–17 characterizes them as having a didactic function, which seems plausible to me, but secondary to other functions. I regret having located this work too late thoroughly to assimilate its contributions.

Figure 20.11 'Christ in Majesty', detail of the upper zone showing the enthroned Christ and chariot wheels, eastern niche, Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit (cell XVII); Clédat, *Le monastère*, pl. XLII.

for ascetic metamorphosis were the angelic virtues, prophets, apostles, and angels.[61]

The culmination of this host of animal, human, saintly, and angelic beings in the monasteries at Bawit and Saqqara is the depiction of Christ in the eastern niche (**Fig.** 20.11). These niches include great variety, but the most consistent representation is of Christ in Majesty, either alone or above other figures, such as the Virgin Mary and apostles. Christ is shown seated on a throne, enclosed within a mandorla surrounded by the four incorporeal beings, and supported by flaming chariot wheels. This standard iconographic type, found all over the early Byzantine world, has been interpreted by art historians as a fusion of Old and New Testament sources, most particularly drawing on the prophecies of Ezekiel and Isaiah and the Book of Revelation.[62]

The dominant intention informing these depictions of Christ arises from the monastic practice of learning to ignore the material world and see the

[61] Bolman 2001; 1998.
[62] Ezekiel 1, Isaiah 6, and Revelation 4. See De Grooth and van Moorsel 1977–8: 233–45.

spiritual one, a process which is sometimes called 'the spirit of visions'.[63] The successful practitioner learns to look at God. Numerous accounts exist of holy ascetics seeing divine light, angels, the hand of God, and the enthroned Christ in Majesty.[64] One elder ascetic said: 'The perfect labor of monks is for a man to have his gaze directed towards God firmly and continually.' The disciple asked: 'How ought a man to see the order of the divine vision?' The old man replied: 'The Scriptures have shown him how. . . . Ezekiel saw him on the chariot of the cherubim. And Isaiah saw him upon a lofty and glorious throne . . .'[65] It is as if the monastic elder were describing the paintings in the cells (**Fig.** 20.11).

Other passages from the desert fathers refer to this practice. According to Cassian, Apa Moses tells us that 'even a momentary departure from gazing on Christ is fornication. And when our gaze has wandered ever so little from Him, let us turn the eyes of the soul back to Him, and recall our mental gaze as in a perfectly straight direction.'[66] The tie to the painted cell is made explicit in another passage from the *Apophthegmata*: 'And make thy cell a hall of judgment of thyself, and a place for striving against devils and evil passions, and let there be depicted therein the kingdom [of heaven], and Gehenna, and death and life . . . And let thy habitation be free from superfluous things . . .'[67] The last part of this passage shows emphatically that the paintings are not superfluous; they are not decoration.

Frank and Nelson have explored the relationship between sight and touch, as they were understood in late antique Egypt and in Byzantium. In a continuation of classical beliefs, the eye was understood to make haptic contact with the visible world.[68] Sight was privileged over the other senses, and one Iconophile even argued that 'the image was greater than the text'.[69] As Frank expresses it, characterizing writing about sight and pilgrimage to holy places, 'seeing engenders change in the viewer'.[70] Turning to a monastic context, the fifth- or sixth-century Pseudo-Shenoute attributes dynamic powers to sight: 'For what the eye sees it appropriates.'[71] This

[63] Budge 1907: II.237, 272, 327.
[64] Evagrius, *Chapters* 81; Bamberger 1980: 68; Van Moorsel 1986: 337–40.
[65] Budge 1907: II.271.
[66] Cassian, Part I, 'First Conference of Abba Moses', chapter 13, in P. Schaff (ed.), *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ser. 2 vol. XI (Edinburgh 1890): 12, available at http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/NPNF2-11/Npnf2-11-49.htm#P3473_1296033.
[67] 'Questions and Answers on the Visions of the Mind', no. 602; Budge 1907: II.279.
[68] Frank 2000, esp. 122–25; Nelson 2000.
[69] Nelson 2000: 154.
[70] 'The repeated "you have seen" links each act of seeing with a transformation . . . visual perception triggers an immediate bond with divine presence, a bond that is edifying and permanently transforming.' Frank 2000: 111.
[71] *Pseudo-Shenoute on Christian Behaviour* 40.7; trans. K. H. Kuhn (Leuven 1960): i, 55, 59. See Frank 2000: 131.

charges the act of looking with a potential that can be dangerous, but positively transformative as well, if one is looking at the right things.[72]

This ritualized act of looking was part of prayer; it is in direct opposition to Evagrius' admonition: 'Do not by any means strive to fashion some image or visualize some form at the time of prayer.'[73] The textual references to the 'eyes of the soul', when considered in relation to the construction of the ideal cell as the primary site for distraction-free prayer, the existence of countless densely painted oratories, and the dominant orientation of the monastic body when engaged in prayer, demonstrate the existence of a specific, ritual-centred monastic visuality. The ultimate goal was not to see the paintings themselves.[74] They were a focusing device, used in the process of learning to see the eternal world of the spirit and for other purposes as well. The paintings had multiple functions, not all of which can be discerned, but, in addition to teaching the monk how to see God, they certainly also worked as models for imitation and to protect him from demons and the passions. Pseudo-Shenoute warns of the dangers of seeing, that is to say, appropriating, the wrong things, but I think in the context of the densely painted cells it is useful to consider that seeing itself was a dynamic and powerful act that could, perhaps, be used to effect release from the torments of demons, and to approach and appropriate some of the essence of the holy fathers, martyrs, prophets, angels, and even Christ, shown in the cell.[75]

Considerable future analysis is necessary to amplify and refine this preliminary study of the *raisons d'être* for the large numbers of paintings found in monastic oratories in Egypt. Our dating of paintings needs to be firmly established and tied to a more sophisticated diachronic and regional understanding of monastic practice.[76] The shift from Evagrius' anti-imagistic prayer to the instruction to depict key subjects for monastic development in the cell is a dramatic one, and may indicate a temporal and doctrinal change, for example the ultimate success of the anthropomorphite position

[72] Nelson 2000: 159.
[73] Evagrius, *Chapters* 114–15; Bamberger 1980: 74.
[74] Here is one of many parallels with pilgrims, who saw through the face of the ascetic to see 'patriarchs, prophets and angels'. See Frank 2000: 134–70, esp. 168–9. Iacobini 2000: 219–20 presents an impressive analysis of the Christ in Majesty iconography. However, while he ties the paintings of Christ in Majesty in the cells to the instructions to see God, he describes the monks as having the *paintings* before their eyes (for contemplation, for recollection, as an *apotropaion*), and does not understand them as *seeing through* the paintings.
[75] Frank 2000: 131 discusses both the dangers and the benefits of 'the power of the gaze' according to late antique constructions of visuality. Also, her compelling account of the pilgrims' driving desire to see the faces of holy ascetics (chapter 5, 134–70) may constitute a parallel, in a different setting, for the monks' desire to see God. Frank links these pilgrims' descriptions of sanctity with icons (180), through a shared method of seeing, and this is precisely what I am attempting to map out with specific reference to monastic paintings.
[76] Rassart-Debergh 2003: 486, says that it is still too early to do this even for Kellia.

in Egypt, since the majority of the densely painted oratories seem to date to the sixth century at the earliest.[77] However, it could simply indicate yet one more example of the complexity and diversity of monastic practice. Unfortunately we have no firmly dated evidence for monastic painting in oratories before the sixth century, but it seems quite possible to me that while Evagrius was advocating non-imagistic prayer, some of his contemporaries were praying while looking at elaborate crosses and depictions of Christ in prayer niches. In favour of this position is the evidence, pointed out in this connection by Marguerite Rassart-Debergh, of pagan paintings at Karanis that cannot date later than the early fourth century.[78] The variation in dominant image choice between Kellia, on the one hand, and Bawit and Saqqara, on the other, suggests not change over time, since all of these paintings are roughly contemporary, but instead perhaps difference in monastic practice or doctrine.

We need to consider gender. The emphasis on male exemplars found in the textual sources is echoed in the visual record, underscoring the standard construction of Egyptian monasticism as a gender-specific activity.[79] Yet we know that female monastics existed in large numbers, for example at Bawit, but the graffiti and inscriptions in the cells that have been excavated show that these were the province of men. Rare depictions of female monastics have survived, most notably that of Ama Rachel, the head of the women's monastery at Bawit (**Fig.** 20.12). Should the French expedition to Bawit uncover the women's part of the complex, it may be possible to undertake a comparative gender analysis of the architecture and the paintings.

What do these conclusions about monastic painting and spiritual practice in Egypt tell us about the inclusion of paintings in monastic oratories elsewhere in the Byzantine world and their function? This is a difficult subject to address, because of the paucity of surviving painted remains from the pre-Iconoclastic period outside of Egypt. In the Holy Land, oratories are readily identifiable, but little visual embellishment has survived in them. John Moschos describes a devil attempting to persuade a monk who lived in a cave on the Mount of Olives to cease his devotions to an icon, making it clear that at least some ascetics outside of Egypt employed images.[80] Catherine Jolivet-Lévy has observed that the identification of monastic oratories, as distinct from churches, is exceptionally difficult in Cappadocia.[81]

[77] Clark 1992: 43–84. [78] Rassart-Debergh 2004: 1473; Boak and Peterson 1931: 9.
[79] Frank 1998: 505.
[80] John Moschos, *The Spiritual Meadow* 45, intro. and trans. J. Wortley (Kalamazoo 1992): 35–6.
[81] Jolivet-Lévy 2001: 17.

Figure 20.12 'Ama Rachel', detail, Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit (room 40); Ét. Drioton, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît* (MIFAO 59, Cairo 1943), pl. XLIX.

Figure 20.13 'Cross', wall painting, eastern end, chapel in the wall, Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai; reproduced through the courtesy of the Michigan–Princeton–Alexandria Expeditions to Mount Sinai.

However, it is interesting to note that the two most popular subjects for monastic oratories in early Byzantine Egypt, Christ in Majesty and the cross, can both be found in Cappadocian churches of the same period.[82]

One example that is not considered part of the Egyptian corpus is the small sixth- or seventh-century painted oratory set within one of the

[82] And yet more interesting is the fact that a middle Byzantine painting of a gemmed cross with the bust of Christ was found in Cappadocia. See Thierry 1986: 207; Jolivet-Lévy 2001: 35.

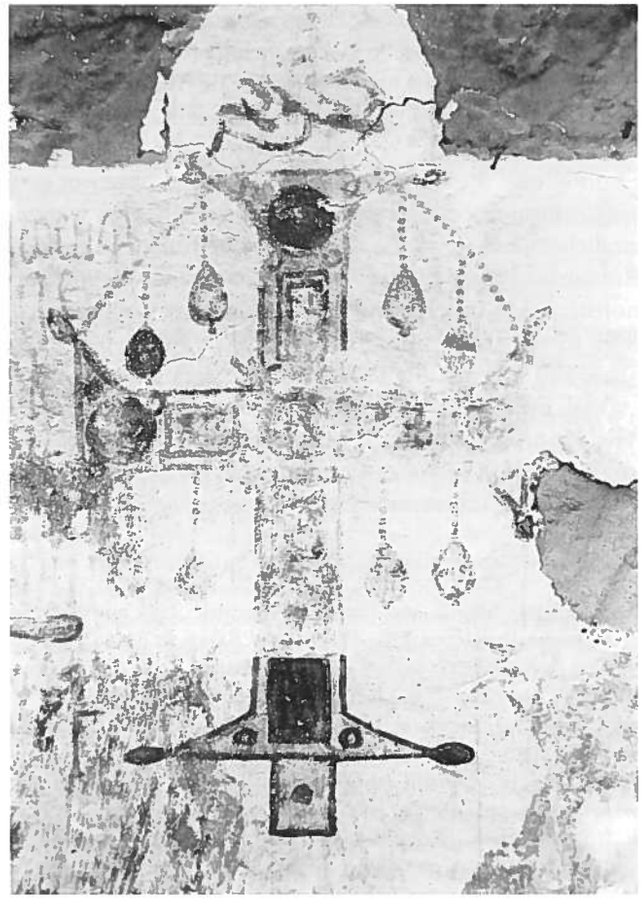

Figure 20.14 'Cross', eastern wall above niche, Kellia (Qusur el-Izeila 19/20, room 2); *Les Kellia, ermitages coptes en Basse-Egypte*, ed. Y. Mottier and N. Bosson (Geneva 1989): 76, fig. 15.

Justinianic walls of the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai (**Fig.** 20.13).[83] A jewelled cross at Kellia (**Fig.** 20.14) and the Sinai example are certainly very similar in placement and iconography, and suggest that densely painted oratories may once have existed in large numbers outside of Egypt. Both of these crosses were painted post-Chalcedon, and they make it difficult to dismiss the profusion of images in Egypt as a provincial aberration,

[83] Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973: 6, 17.

or to argue for the uniqueness of Egypt's monastic paintings in the pre-Iconoclastic period. The quantity of paintings in Egypt, the often close ties between monastic communities throughout Byzantium, the monastic adherence to the Iconodule position, and the esteem in which the Egyptian ascetic practices were held make it plausible to imagine numerous painted oratories throughout the early Byzantine world that have not survived.[84]

Another strong argument for the notion that the Egyptian *exempla* point to lost parallels elsewhere is the dominance of ritual-centred visuality in the late Roman and early Byzantine worlds, a phenomenon that has been well demonstrated.[85] Indeed, the very intensity of the controversy over icons attests to the strong impulse to visualize and depict. The monk's performance, and his carefully fashioned performative environment, were intensely visual. Even Evagrius, the vigorous opponent of monastic visuality, could not help himself from conceptualizing prayer and God in visual terms: 'By true prayer a monk becomes another angel, for he ardently longs to see the face of the Father in heaven.'[86]

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[84] For the perceived value of Egyptian monasticism, see Frank 1998: 483–505, esp. 483–4, and n. 2.

[85] Frank and Vikan have demonstrated this point for the visual culture of pilgrimage. See Vikan 1990: 97–107. This last is only one of several interesting publications by Vikan on the subject. Elsner has done so for religious ritual, art, and architecture in the Graeco-Roman and Byzantine worlds: Elsner 2000. Nelson has shown that the act of seeing in Byzantium was constructed as an 'active and determinative' process. Nelson 2000: 159.

[86] Evagrius, *Chapters* 113, 150; Bamberger 1980: 74, 79. In his privileging of sight, Evagrius follows an ancient tradition. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.1.2, quoted in Nelson 2000: 164 n. 32.

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PART IV

Epilogue

CHAPTER 21

The Arab conquest of Egypt and the beginning of Muslim rule[1]

Petra M. Sijpesteijn

The rise of Islam in the seventh century set in train some of the most profound and long-lasting historical changes of the post-classical world. From its epicentre on the Arabian Peninsula, the explosive energy of this new religion swept the Mediterranean world, winning within a century an empire that stretched from North Africa and Spain across the former Byzantine and Persian provinces of the Near East all the way to India. The sheer scale and rapidity of these gains still inspire wonder. Muslim armies entered Egypt in 639, seven years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, capturing Alexandria in 642. A new stage in Egypt's long history had begun.

Yet appreciating the significance of Islam's rise is very different from understanding its causes and its workings. For such an epochal event, we know remarkably little about it, and this uncertainty encompasses not merely the finer points of antiquarian detail, but basic elements of the factual record. What exactly did the Arabs have in mind when they set off from Arabia and on what terms are we to understand their imperial agenda? What was their intention when they invaded Egypt? Why did they invade at all? We are also no wiser about the impact of the conquest. Was it catastrophic or largely unnoticed – or even welcome? How did conquering Arabs and subject Egyptians interact, politically and culturally? How much of the institutional basis of their government did the Arabs import, and how much did they co-opt or adapt? These are fundamental questions, and all of them still largely open.

Rather than offering a narrative of the conquest and the first fifty years, of Muslim rule,[2] this chapter will focus on the main points of contention and the evidence available to address them. These questions I have grouped

[1] In this paper I will use the terms Muslim and Arab interchangeably, acknowledging that we do not know exactly what Islam meant at this time and that the invasion triggered a very diverse ethnic and religious immigration. I would like to thank Nikolaos Gonis, Federico Morelli, Alexander Schubert, and Lennart Sundelin for their invaluable help.

[2] For attempts at this, see Butler 1978; Kaegi 1998; Christides 1998.

into three broad areas: the plan behind the conquest of Egypt; the system that the Muslims used to rule Egypt; and the interaction between Egypt's culture and that of its conquerors. Before we turn to these, however, we should first understand the nature and limitations of our sources.

THE STATE OF THE EVIDENCE

How can it be that the history of early Islamic Egypt is so poorly known? The answer lies not just in the paucity of evidence, but in the special nature of its biases. The conquest and beginning of Muslim rule in Egypt is served by a rich literary tradition of Arabic narrative history. But the earliest extant versions of these accounts date from the ninth century, and while they clearly draw upon earlier (now lost) sources – largely transmitted orally – they are separated from the events they describe by more than 200 years, time enough for the story they are telling to have acquired a certain formulaic shape and ideological import.[3] Non-Islamic sources for the conquest, while preserving older information dating back to the time of the conquest, are all known to us from much later recensions and they have their own prejudices and preoccupations.[4]

Archaeology offers a potentially useful way to offset some of these problems, but although interest in the transition from Byzantine to early Islamic Egypt is stimulating new research, relative to Egypt's earlier and more fêted ages the archaeology of the Islamic period remains underdeveloped.[5] Glass weights and coins from early Islamic Egypt offer a well-documented source for the study of continuity and change after the Muslim conquest, but the results of this research are only slowly finding their way into mainstream historiography.

Perhaps the most promising source of evidence comes from tens of thousands of Greek, Coptic, and Arabic papyri that survive from the period. These have the advantage not only of dating from the time of the conquest and the post-conquest period, but of recording aspects of Egyptian life – and strata of Egyptian society – to which we would otherwise have no access, and with a richness, immediacy, and variety unmatched by any other source. Aggregating this vast and disparate resource and integrating it at the analytical level remains one of the pre-eminent scholarly challenges of early Islamic history. This chapter will be intimately concerned with exploiting the papyri and exploring the new insights they offer.

[3] For a discussion of some of the most important narrative sources, cf. Kennedy 1998: 63. For the *Futūḥ al-Baḥnasā*, cf. Jarry 1970.
[4] Den Heijer 1996 and 2000; Wipszycka 1992; Hoyland 1997.
[5] E.g., Gascoigne 2004; Gayraud 1992; Kubiak 1987.

THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT

Why did the Muslims invade Egypt? For Muslim authors of the ninth century, militant expansion was the logical extension of the divine injunction – relayed in the Qur'an[6] – to bring as much of the known world under Islamic rule as possible. For modern scholars, however, this explanation poses certain problems, predicated as it is on an Islam fully formed in all of its fundamental tenets – a view challenged by those who sometimes see even the Qur'an as a product of post-conquest society.[7] Was there a grand strategy at all then, or should we see the conquests, as some have argued, as the result of entrepreneurial opportunism – the 'accidental' imperialism of unexpectedly successful Bedouin raiding – given a historical meaning only *ex post facto*? Where, between these various positions, does the balance lie?

To begin with, we should point out that – with or without the Qur'an – the Muslim conquests are unlikely to have been the result of one unitary impulse. The Muslim army that invaded Egypt, for example, consisted of a range of ethnic and religious components, with a majority of Arab tribesmen mostly from the settled communities of the Northern Hijaz and Yemen, and including Arab Bedouins, Christian and Jewish converts, Roman soldiers from Syria and Palestine,[8] and Persians.[9] Even Arab Christian tribes from the Sinai desert are said to have joined the Muslim forces on their way to Egypt.[10] We can assume a fairly wide variety of motives, from the vividly eschatological sentiments circulating at the time (as we know from traces preserved in the Arabic *ḥadīth* literature)[11] to more mundane urges to win booty and 'see the world'.

At the command level, however, we do discern certain patterns. The fact that the conquering armies deployed their troops against one target at a time,[12] first securing those areas that were under control of Arab tribes in Palestine and Syria, strongly suggests that the conquests were the outcome of conscious and coordinated strategic decisions. While individual commanders appear to have had fairly wide latitude to pursue their own

[6] Q IX: 29. [7] E.g., Hawting 1999.
[8] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.32–9; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 129.
[9] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 125, 128, 129; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.36, 37.
[10] Mu'izz, *al-Bahnasā* 59–60, 74, 105, 125, 154, 161, 195. The occasional mention in the sources that 'Bedouins' aided the Muslims in Egypt might refer to Arab tribes having moved into Egypt before the Muslim conquest (Mu'izz, *al-Bahnasā* 156). Cf. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.32–9.
[11] Cook 1996.
[12] 'Amr's moves in Egypt display similar tactical and strategic insights, such as cutting the Delta from the southern part of the country by capturing the fortress of Babylon, capturing Babylon by cutting off supply lines when siege engines were lacking, and the encircling of the Byzantine army at the battle of 'Ayn Shams (Heliopolis); Christides 1998: 156.

judgment and ambitions, all worked towards the same goal and within the same framework.

The conquest of Egypt was integral to this goal, and when the Roman province of Syria fell to the Muslims after their victory at Yarmuk in 636, the 'jewel in the Roman imperial crown' was the next obvious acquisition target, both for its immense wealth and as a springboard to further conquest in North Africa and beyond. Invading Egypt was also attractive because the Byzantines, cut off from Egypt by land and unlikely to split their efforts, were concentrating their forces in Anatolia to defend Constantinople. The Muslim general 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (d. 664) was in a better position than most to appreciate Egypt's attractions, being familiar with the country from his days as a merchant before the conquests[13] and from having led the Gaza expedition in 637. As he reputedly argued before the caliph 'Umar (ruled 634–44), 'the conquest of Egypt will give great power to the Muslims and will be a great aid to them, for it is the wealthiest land and the weakest in fighting and war power.'[14]

The clear chain of command should not obscure the tensions between the caliph and his generals and the sometimes mercurial nature of strategic decision-making. According to the sources, the caliph 'Umar, having been talked into the invasion by 'Amr, had an eleventh-hour change of heart, too late to stop the invasion. This story may be an elaboration of 'Amr's later reputation for trenchant independent-mindedness as governor of Egypt (639–45 and 658–64), but it also highlights the strength that control of Egypt was felt to confer and the caliphate's wariness about who should be allowed to hold it.

The Muslim invading army seems to have been small and not especially well equipped. Muslim sources give a number of 3,500 or 4,000 for 'Amr's army, which consisted mainly of cavalry forces but lacked war machines and other technical support. A reinforcement led by Zubayr (d. 656) of 4,000 soldiers, according to John of Nikiou, or 12,000, according to Muslim sources, was sent by the caliph 'Umar from Palestine to help 'Amr conquer the fortress of Babylon.[15] The army lived off the land, capturing weapons and machinery from the Byzantines after the fall of Babylon and demanding horses, boats, and manpower from the Egyptian population.[16]

[13] For 'Amr's trading in Egypt, cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 53–5 and Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.40.

[14] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 56.

[15] John of Nikiou 112.5–6; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 56; Kindī, *Wulāt* 8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 212.

[16] For the demand of horses, cf. *SB* VIII 9755. Papyri dating from 643 mention that Muslim forces in Upper Egypt had sailor crews, heavily armed forces (Grohmann 1952: 112–14), and maybe armour repairers: *SB* VI 9577, but cf. Harrauer and Sijpesteijn 1988. For the capturing of weapons after the fall of Babylon, cf. John of Nikiou 97.2.

The impression of a small but dogged force is strengthened by the course of the conquest. Military skirmishes and raids most likely preceded the full invasion and, once on Egyptian soil, Muslim progress was slow.[17] The conquering army was far from being an unstoppable force, and while Byzantine forces and native Egyptians did not on the whole distinguish themselves by the vigour of their resistance, fierce fighting nevertheless ensued on several occasions. More than once, when a town proved particularly obdurate, 'Amr was forced to revise his plans and settle for subduing the surrounding countryside.[18] The conquest of Upper and Middle Egypt took some five or six years to complete, and the southern border was not secured and a final peace treaty with the Nubians concluded until the year 651/2.[19] Byzantine coastal raids continued to be a threat, and Alexandria was even recaptured in 645/6.[20] In the Muslim sources, however, these military setbacks have mostly been suppressed, leaving us with a picture of the conquest as a series of valiant battles and sieges.[21]

We also do not see evidence of large-scale internal disruption. The conquest does not seem to have precipitated mass emigration of the local population and archaeological evidence does not support a violent conquest.[22] Some Egyptians are said to have fled before the invading armies 'and made their way to Alexandria, abandoning all their possessions and wealth and cattle', but they returned soon after the fighting had subsided.[23] The conquests of Alexandria, especially the second one in 646, are said to have resulted in significant Byzantine casualties and the enslavement of Byzantine families, with 'Greeks' being forced to evacuate Egypt by sea.[24] Stories in Christian sources about the slaughtering of natives stand in contrast to their generally more favourable reports of the Muslim commander, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ, who 'took none of the property of the Churches, committed no act of spoliation or plunder, and preserved them throughout all his

[17] Perhaps also involving a tribute paid by the Byzantines to ward off an Arab conquest for several years preceding the invasion (Hoyland 1997: 574–90). Cf. the Muslim conquest of the Pentapolis and Armenia (n. 21 below; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 110, 172–3; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 221–4; Kennedy 1998: 67).

[18] John of Nikiou 115; Kaegi 1998: 50, 55.

[19] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.542–9.

[20] A Byzantine raid on Alexandria is also mentioned to have taken place in 637 (!) (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I.2594). Cf. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.34–6. Balādhurī mentions two revolts in Alexandria (*Futūḥ* 220).

[21] Compare the accounts in John of Nikiou and the Arab sources on the conquest of Egypt. Cf. Sebeos (95–114; 132–54) and Balādhurī (*Futūḥ* 193–209) on the conquest of Armenia.

[22] Some Romans were captured and their possessions confiscated (John of Nikiou 108.4). In Thebes the Muslim invasion does not seem to have been very disruptive (Wilfong 1989: 96–7).

[23] John of Nikiou 108.6.

[24] Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 221. For other incidents of violence, see John of Nikiou 118.8, Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 83, and Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213.

days'.[25] For later Muslim authors, however, seeing the conquest *as* a conquest, rather than a treaty-based cession, had legal implications, influencing how free a hand the new rulers had in imposing taxes, and shaped the Arabic historical tradition on the conquest accordingly.[26] In fact, despite the muddle in the sources on this issue, it is more likely that Egypt was won through a protracted series of treaties with local individual commanders and communities, sometimes preceded by battles.

Some Egyptians supported the Muslim armies, though it is hard to generalize about their motives. A key question here is the extent to which religious differences with Constantinople had fostered a nationalistic sentiment that favoured secession from the Byzantine empire.[27] It has long been shown that there was not a sharp split between an elite Greek-speaking and Hellenized Chalcedonian minority based in Alexandria and a Coptic-speaking, native monophysite majority in the countryside. Egyptian identity, rather, seems to have been characterized by fluidity and multiplicity. The prevalence of multilingualism, the Hellenization of many aspects of daily life, and the absence of a united Egyptian church meant that loyalties shifted according to context. Nevertheless, religious persecution bolstered feelings of solidarity and community among Egypt's native inhabitants, which were partially defined in opposition to the Byzantine authorities. As John of Nikiou writes: 'When the Muslim saw the weakness of the Romans and the hostility of the people to the emperor Heraclius because of the persecution wherewith he had visited all the land of Egypt in regard to the orthodox faith at the instigation of Cyrus the Chalcedonian patriarch [in office 631/2–41], they became bolder and stronger in the war.'[28] According to Samuel of Qalamun (d. *c.* 640), whose words are preserved in a tenth-century source, God in reply to requests from persecuted Egyptians had sent 'this nation (*umma*) that demands gold, not religious orthodoxy (*madhab*)'.[29] There is evidence, moreover, in a Coptic source purporting to date to the seventh century that religious differences were perceived by some contemporaries as following ethnic lines. It reports that after the Muslim conquest the Coptic patriarch Benjamin (d. 661) chose to reside in the Monastery of Metras because all monasteries in Egypt had been 'defiled' by the Chalcedonian faith, 'except this monastery alone, for the inmates of it were exceedingly

[25] John of Nikiou 121.3. On the treatment of 'Amr in the *History of the Patriarchs*, cf. den Heijer 1996.
[26] Albrecht Noth has shown that at least some of the traditions about Egypt's conquest by force were brought in circulation in the early eighth century in relation to this debate: Noth 1973: 154–6.
[27] Cf., e.g., Butler 1978; Jones 1959; Winkelmann 1979; Wipszycka 1992.
[28] John of Nikiou 115.9. Cf. 'And people began to help the Moslem' (ibid. 113.2). Egyptians refusing to fight the Muslim: ibid. 113.3.
[29] *Apocalypse*, frag. 20v.

powerful, being Egyptians, all of them natives without a stranger among them'.[30] From the Islamic period comes further evidence that there existed an ethnic or racial framework within which some Egyptians defined themselves, with early eighth-century *ḥadīth*s seeking to establish ties of kinship between the Egyptians (described in some cases as 'those with curly hair') and the Arabs.[31] But we should also not underestimate personal motives and individual calculations of self-preservation as stimuli to acquiescence.[32] In a pastoral letter preserved in an Arabic chronicle the patriarch Benjamin allegedly enjoins the Copts, in view of the inevitable defeat of the Byzantines, to join 'Amr's army.[33]

After subduing the country, the Muslim troops settled in the garrison city of Fustat, founded near the site of the Roman fortress Babylon, where they remained a minority separated from the majority native population. Caliph 'Umar allegedly made the decision that the conquered lands were not to be divided among the conquerors but were to be left in the hands of the indigenous population, while the fruits of their labour were used to provide for the troops in both cash and kind. Actively discouraged from making a living in agriculture, the soldiery was supposed to be readying itself for the onward march to conquest of the world. The famous story of 'Amr's soldiers taking possession of the beautiful houses of Alexandria and then being recalled by the caliph 'Umar to more modest living quarters in the garrison city of Fustat is exemplary of the Muslim desire to prevent troops becoming too comfortable in their new home and forgetting their duty to conquer.[34] Thus, while Egypt provided the fuel for the Muslim war engine, it also supplied the Hijaz, the Muslim heartland, with wheat, lentils, onions, vinegar, and textiles as well as tax payments.[35]

The point was to control Egypt and take advantage of its resources more than to bask in the trappings of imperial splendour. Hence the Muslims were not overly interested in carrying home triumphal symbols of victory, whether these be captured enemy leaders, slaves, or religious trophies;[36] there were to be, for example, no Egyptian obelisks in Medina or Damascus. Their triumph lay in establishing their authority over the newly conquered area, by which they satisfied the religious command of their God, and in obtaining as much material gain from Egypt as possible, to which end all

[30] *History of the Patriarchs*, 498.
[31] Bashear 1997: 68–70; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 2–4; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2585–6.
[32] John of Nikiou 120, 119; *History of the Patriarchs* 459; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 73, 74.
[33] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 58–9. [34] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.30–1.
[35] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 165. Cf. below n. 58.
[36] Reports in Arabic sources of 'Amr sending captives to Medina who are then returned by 'Umar seem to serve to enhance the caliph's reputation (Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 83; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213).

administrative and political decisions and measures taken after the conquest were directed.

MUSLIM RULE IN EGYPT

The Muslims did not overhaul the administrative system of their new possession. Only the highest-placed officials in the administration were replaced by Arab appointees, while Christian officials at lower levels were largely left alone, although subjected to Arab supervision.[37] The continuities in structure and administrative personnel, and the observation that most Arabic narrative accounts of early administrative innovations are anachronistic, have given rise to an academic consensus that sees the 'uncivilized' Arab invaders as having no alternative to offer to the administrative systems they encountered in the countries they conquered. This view needs to be revisited.

The continuities in the daily economic, social, and cultural life in Egypt after the conquest are indeed striking. But the introduction of administrative innovations started immediately after the conquests. The question is not just how or why the Muslims maintained pre-existing structures and personnel, but what this tells us about the kind of rule they envisaged in Egypt beyond continuity of administration and the stability that this ensured.

The impact of Muslim rule on the structure and execution of the administration was immediate. Muslim authorities closely supervised and controlled the administrative tasks assigned to officials, something clearly indicated by the sharp increase in the number of Greek and Coptic administrative and fiscal documents compared to that of the immediate pre-Islamic period.[38] Muslim officials moved around the country supervising the assignment and payment of taxes, which were collected by local Egyptian administrators, while maintaining regular contact with the central authorities in Fustat. In a receipt issued in 642 the *dux*, or governor, of the province of Arcadia writes that part of the taxes have been delivered by the pagarch 'according to the declaration of Harigatos the *amīr*, which is here with me'.[39] Harigatos has been identified as Khārija b. Ḥudhāfa (d. 661), a commander in 'Amr's army. The letter-cum-receipt functioned as evidence that the villagers had paid the requisitioned taxes, and it could not be issued until Khārija had sent clearance from the capital.

[37] E.g., John of Nikiou 120.30.
[38] I wish to thank Nikolaos Gonis for pointing this out to me. [39] *SB* VIII 9749.

Army units spread throughout Egypt following the Muslim conquest, as requisition orders for provender and other deliveries raised on the spot show.[40] Even these seemingly ad hoc measures, however, fitted into a larger, centrally controlled administrative network. A requisition order to a pagarch for a delivery of fodder and food to a Muslim army unit ends with the assurance that the district will not have to sustain other billets, revealing a surprising level of central organization and consideration for the indigenous population.[41] The new rulers' hands-on involvement in the fiscal organization was not limited to one-off deliveries in kind, but extended to more regular tax collection, as a fragment of an Arabic demand note for taxes dated 643 calculated in dinars shows.[42]

Another requisition order to supply a post office with food and fodder dated 669 is our earliest evidence for a state-organized and provisioned postal service run by Muslims.[43] The presence of soldiers, travelling tax supervisors, and the official postal system shows the new rulers' commitment to taking control of the administrative and fiscal organization beyond the capital Fustat.

These fiscal and administrative innovations frequently broke with immediate pre-Islamic Egyptian practice. Administrative districts were joined together and split up in new ways.[44] The most striking of these innovations, however, is the institution of the Muslim poll tax. Very shortly after the conquest, Athanasios, pagarch of the Hermopolite in the late Byzantine period, whose office continued under the Muslims, wrote to his subordinate Shenoute: 'at the order of the most glorious *amīr* it has been determined that the poll tax (*andrismos*) will be levied in the Hermopolite and I am worried that this will scare them and that they will run away'.[45] Athanasios continues his letter with an order to Shenoute to arrest and dispatch to him any peasant or merchant found fleeing the villages of his district as a result of this new tax. Greek papyri referring to the poll tax, which until now were considered to be from the Byzantine period, have been redated to the Islamic period, leaving no secure evidence for a Byzantine, pre-Islamic poll tax.[46] Nor is the term *andrismos* used in pre-Islamic papyri to refer to the

[40] See, for example, *SB* VIII 9749–56. [41] *SB* XX 14443.
[42] P.Berol. 15002, depicted in Grohmann 1966: pl. II.
[43] *P.Mert.* II 100. For the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982: 88.
[44] The two former provinces of Arcadia and the Thebaid were united (Gascou and Worp 1982: 90; Keenan 1977: 94), while the Herakleopolite was divided in an upper and lower district (*SB* XX 14443). While attested for the first time in papyri from the Islamic period, these changes in the composition of administrative districts might have been introduced by Byzantine administrators after recapturing Egypt from the Persians in 629.
[45] *CPR* XXII 1. Cf. Gascou 1983: 101.
[46] Federico Morelli and Nikolaos Gonis, personal communication.

poll tax.[47] The tax imposed on Shenoute's district should not necessarily be identified with the *jizya*, the religious poll tax to be paid by non-Muslim subjects,[48] but it is a new tax to be paid by Egyptian merchants *and* peasants alike, distinguishing between rulers and ruled, Muslims and non-Muslims, and Egyptians and conquerors.

Another area in which the new rulers made their presence felt was the documentary tradition. One of the most striking continuities that the papyrological material from early Islamic Egypt witnesses is the continued use of pre-Islamic languages in the official administration. Greek, and to a lesser extent Coptic, continued to be used as the administrative languages of the Muslim chancellery in Egypt long after the conquest, surviving at the lowest levels of the administration possibly into the ninth century.[49]

Nevertheless, Arabic was considered essential to the Islamic empire's communication with its subjects right from the start, although the 'message' it conveyed was often less the immediate content of the text than its symbolic power. Arabic identified the new rulers and their triumphant religion, eventually penetrating into the remotest corners of the country. The earliest two dated Arabic papyri from Muslim Egypt were written during the conquest of Egypt (643). One is the end of the Arabic part of a demand-note for taxes calculated in dinars.[50] The other is a bilingual Greek–Arabic receipt for sixty-five sheep delivered to a Muslim army unit.[51] The use of the *hijra* date in these earliest datable papyri similarly functions as a religious and political symbol.

The papyri testify to a well-developed documentary practice, with Arab scribes and an Arabic scribal tradition distinctive from the pre-Islamic Egyptian tradition.[52] In the earliest bilingual papyri the Arabic is not translated from the Greek text but follows its own conventions. Greek geographical

[47] The other Greek term for poll tax used in the Arab period, *diagraphon*, does not have this meaning in pre-Islamic texts (Gascou 1983; Gonis 2003a: 150, 2–3 n.).

[48] Mentioned in Q IX: 29, and developed and defined in later Muslim legal texts.

[49] The first Arabic tax receipt for an individual taxpayer (as opposed to a community) issued by a Muslim tax collector is dated 15 August 714 (AH 95) (*SB* XVI 13018; redated by Gonis 2001: 226). The latest datable edited Greek papyrus is *CPR* XXII 21 (dated 796/7). Coptic was the main language of documents in western Thebes from around 600 onwards, a situation not changed by the Islamic conquest (Wilfong 1989: 94–5).

[50] P.Berol. 15002, depicted in Grohmann 1966: pl. II. [51] *SB* VI 9576.

[52] Only in the late eighth-early ninth century do Arabic documents start to show influences from the native Egyptian legal tradition (Khan 1994). Cf. the 'translation' of the two-year gap in Arabic *entagia* between the tax year calculated in solar years and the document date in Islamic lunar years by Greek scribes into indiction dates in the Greek papyri where the diverging dates did not make sense (Casson 1938).

names continue to be used in Greek papyri and are also attested transliterated in Arabic papyri. Arabic place names, which often point back to the Egyptian name via the Coptic, are also attested in contemporary Arabic documents, as well as transliterated in Greek documents.[53] Studies comparing the legal and epistolary formulae in early Arabic documents from Egypt, Andalusia, and the eastern Islamic empire show that they all share common features, following a tradition distinct from the native one and suggesting a common origin antedating the Muslim conquests of these areas.[54] Post-conquest Greek papyri use a style and word choice specific to the Islamic period, including new terms and phrases reflecting Arabic idioms and expressions, and others possibly related to the introduction of a technical terminology of non-Egyptian Byzantine origin.[55] Other Greek words obtain new technical meanings in the Islamic period.[56] Byzantine titles continue to be used in Greek papyri for Christian *and* Arab officials.[57] We cannot tell who decided to do this and whether this is an example of conscious or unconscious continuation of Byzantine administrative practice.

A further example of Muslim managerial vision and central planning can be observed in the large infrastructural projects that 'Amr undertook several years after taking control of Egypt. In reply to 'Umar's request for food from Egypt to feed the inhabitants of the Hijaz during a severe drought, 'Amr organized large wheat transports over land and via the Red Sea.[58] In the harbour of Clysma freight ships were built, equipped, and supplied by a well-orchestrated system of supply and transport connecting the Egyptian wheat-producing hinterland with the coast.[59] As part

[53] E.g., Ihnas and Herakleopolis in the bilingual papyrus *SB* VI 9576. *P.Ross.Georg.* V 73 is a list of Greek village names with their 'Arabic' equivalents dated to the eighth century. *P.Khalili* I 1, dating from the early eighth century, provenance Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchos); for the Greek place names, cf. Gonis 2000.

[54] Khan 1994.

[55] In the Arab period the term *diagraphon* is used only replacing the variant *diagraphê* (Gonis 2003a: 150). The term *laura* seems to replace *amphodon* in the Arab period (Gonis 2003a: 154, 1 n.; Worp 2004). For an example of possible Syrian Greek influence, see Morelli 2002: 77. Cf. *CPR* XXII 2.7 commentary.

[56] E.g., *symboulos* (governor) and *protosymboulos* (caliph) (Gascou 1983). *Diagraphon* referring in the Arab period often but not exclusively to poll tax had a different meaning before (Gascou 1983; Gonis 2003a: 150, 2–3 n.). *Chôrion* obtains a technical meaning in the Arab period (Gascou 1983). For a change in meaning in the term *boukellarios*, see Gascou 1976.

[57] Gonis and Morelli 2000: 194, 2 n.

[58] Perhaps on two different occasions in 638/9 (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2574–7) and 641/2 (Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213–14)?

[59] These transports continued for several generations. See, for example, the sailors working on the wheat transports from Clysma mentioned in an eighth-century text (*CPR* XXII 44.10, provenance unknown).

of this project, 'Amr drained Trajan's canal connecting Fustat to the Red Sea, which had sanded up several decades earlier,[60] as well as Alexandria's silted-up canal.[61] Another project in Alexandria was the building and equipping of a large naval fleet some years before the attack on Constantinople from Syria by Mu'āwiya in 654.[62] Seventh/eighth-century papyri also mention a fast messenger system, the *veredarius*, a term which is not attested in documents from Egypt from the three centuries before the conquest.[63] Finally, maintaining and supplying the Muslim forces in their garrison city of Fustat required a particularly well-organized and thought-out network and system of supply. These projects demanded knowledge of and insight into the resources available in Egypt, the development of new infrastructures and the adjustment and updating of existing ones, and the control and development of a well-functioning administrative organization.

Observing that the continuities and changes in the Muslim administration of Egypt were the result of deliberate and coordinated planning is only half of the story; it does not explain where this governmental *savoir faire* came from. The North Arabian and Yemeni tribes in the Muslim invading army had been part of pre-Islamic kingdoms where they had been exposed to court culture and well-developed state organization. Arab tribes such as the Ghassanids and Lakhmids who were fully integrated in the settled communities of Syria are another possible source of administrative knowledge.[64] Another possible source is the Persians who travelled in 'Amr's army or who had remained in Egypt after the Persian occupation, although we cannot be certain of their impact. Native Egyptian administrators remained the majority force behind the Muslim administration for the first fifty years, and their knowledge and experience seem to have been a constant inspiration for administrative decision-making, whether about past surpluses[65] or about sending wheat to the Hijaz.[66]

Egypt's wealth, its closeness to the caliphal seat in Damascus, and its strategic importance for controlling the empire led caliphs to keep an especially close eye on its internal political developments, while at the same time the province was used as a reward for loyal behaviour or for senior members

[60] John of Nikiou 120.31; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 163–5; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.578–9. Cf. Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2574–7.
[61] John of Nikiou 121.3. [62] Sebeos 170. [63] *CPR* XIV 33.2, commentary. Cf. n. 43.
[64] Plenty of Greek building inscriptions from sixth-century Syria contain Arab names (Morrisson and Sodini 2002). See also the first three Arabic inscriptions in the Arabic script from early sixth-century Syria and the arbitration role played by a Ghassanid phylarch in a legal dispute in sixth-century Petra, Jordan (Hoyland 2001; Kaimio 2001).
[65] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.200. [66] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 164–5; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2577.

of the ruling elite. The ensuing tension between appeasing the local Arab elite and simultaneously maintaining tight control of the province determined the province's relation with the caliphal capital. It was addressed by a political administrative structure that reserved key positions, such as head of police and finance director, mostly for local Arab notables appointed by the governor, who was himself appointed directly by the caliph.

The caliphs' wary interest in Egypt was not for nothing. Egypt continued to play a major role in the course of the empire's history, and control over Egypt was a key factor in the outcome of nearly every early conflict in the *umma*. 'Umar had already had to compete with 'Amr over Egypt's riches, but under his successor, the caliph 'Uthmān (ruled 644–56), the conflict came to a climax. 'Uthmān first tried appointing 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd to oversee Egypt's finances, leaving 'Amr with control only of the military and then recalling him from Egypt altogether.[67] The attempt to gain a stronger hold on Egypt and its taxes, however, cost 'Uthmān his life at the hands of a group of dissatisfied Muslims from Egypt. Egypt again played a pivotal role in the first *fitna* (civil war), when Mu'āwiya sent 'Amr to reconquer Egypt, reappointing him governor in 658. In the second *fitna*, too, the caliph Marwān's (ruled 684–5) decisive gambit against the Zubayrids was to concentrate his forces on securing Egypt, and he took especial pains to ensure that, once captured, the governorship passed to his own son, 'Abd al-'Azīz (in office 684–705). When 'Abd al-'Azīz died, his brother, the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (ruled 685–705), appointed one of his own sons, 'Abd Allāh (in office 705–9), as governor, charging him with the task of eliminating every trace of 'Abd al-'Azīz' rule.

'Abd al-Malik made significant adjustments to the organization of the empire, affecting Egypt's administration and leading to increased caliphal control. The motives behind these changes were both financial and ideological: costs due to uprisings and internal military conflicts had increased, while income had fallen due to a slowdown in the rate of conquest and an increase in the rate of conversion (albeit on a small scale at this time). At the same time, the rulers became increasingly concerned to Islamicize government, give Muslims a greater role in the administration, and increase their control over the provinces.

In Egypt the governors 'Abd al-'Azīz and 'Abd Allāh introduced measures aimed at improving the transparency and effectiveness of tax collection and increasing agricultural output. Land surveys and censuses led to an improved registration and supervision of taxpayers and their dues.

[67] Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 223; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 178, quoted in Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.169.

Passports, neck seals, and other measures tracked taxpayers and limited their movements,[68] and forced land assignments and land development programmes increased the agricultural acreage.[69] It is in this period too that monks were taxed for the first time.[70] Not surprisingly, the first Coptic revolts and signs of economic stress in the papyri date to the end of the seventh century,[71] and fugitives start to appear in the papyri in large numbers in early eighth-century documents. In 706 the governor 'Abd Allāh allegedly ordered the Egyptian *dīwān* or chancellery to change from Greek (or Coptic) to Arabic, and he also replaced the Coptic secretary of the *dīwān* with a Syrian from Hims (Edessa).[72] At a lower level, Christian pagarchs, who for the first fifty years of Muslim rule originated from the same landholding elite as their Byzantine predecessors, were starting to be replaced by Muslims. This was not an absolute change – Christians continued on occasion to succeed Muslims as pagarchs – nor did it take place everywhere at the same pace, and the relation between individual communities and the capital Fustat could vary depending, for example, on the pre-Islamic conditions. But as the religious–ethnic affiliation of its holders shifted from being predominantly Christian to being increasingly Muslim, the pagarchs became more dependent on central authority and more reliable. A separate class of Egyptian notables and their estates continue, however, to be attested into the eighth century, and at the village level the tasks that these landed aristocrats had acquired in the Byzantine period, such as local civil judiciary, maintenance of public order, etc., probably continued to fall under their responsibility.[73] The result of this transition was a state that simultaneously decreased its role by delegating authority to local representatives at the level of the pagarchy and increased its presence by ensuring that its regional representatives, lacking an independent power base to sustain them, were personally beholden to it.

From the late seventh century also comes the earliest document mentioning officials of the caliph (*amiras tôn pistôn*).[74] A requisition order for money taxes for the *amīr al-mu'minīn* dates from 'Abd al-'Azīz' governorship.[75] A labour contract to extract the wine from the current year's grape harvest on a caliphal estate in the Fayyum dated 699/700 is the earliest documentary

[68] Robinson 2005. [69] Morelli 2000. [70] Morimoto 1981: 114–15.
[71] *SB* III 7240, dated 697; provenance Thebes (for the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982); Papaconstantinou 2002; Kindī, *Wulāt* 74.
[72] Kindī, *Wulāt* 58–9. But see below, 454.
[73] The *emphanoi* form a separate tax category (*P.Ross.Georg.* IV 6.9–10, dated 710, provenance Ishqaw). For *ousiai*, cf. Banaji 2001: appendix 3.
[74] *P.Apoll.* 37.10. For the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982. [75] Gonis and Morelli 2000.

reference to such an estate.[76] Papyrus protocols bearing the caliph's name from Egypt are known from 'Abd Allāh's governorship onwards.[77] The most extensive papyrological evidence for the supply of goods and personnel from Egypt to support building activities undertaken in Jerusalem, Fustat, and Damascus and to fund imperial campaigns comes from the governorship of Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 709–15).[78] The caliph's role in these documents seems symbolic only, his orders being initiated and executed in his name by the court in Damascus or the governor in Fustat. But other contemporary documents suggest more personal and substantive exchanges between the caliph and certain members of Egypt's elite. One of governor 'Abd al-'Azīz' sons, Sahl b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, wrote to a fellow member of Egypt's elite that the caliph had requested everyone to join him on the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.[79] Control of the pilgrimage ceremonies at Mecca was a clear sign of the caliph's authority, and the call to travel with the caliph's caravan was a shrewd way to test his subjects' loyalty. Another letter mentions that an *amīr* from Egypt received an audience from the *amīr al-mu'minīn* and that some administrators from Syria travelled for administrative business to Egypt.[80]

ARABIZATION AND ISLAMIZATION

The processes of Arabization and Islamization are difficult to define and measure, beginning with the invaders themselves. How religion and Arab ethnicity were interlaced at the time of the conquest is difficult to determine.[81] The term used for the invaders, *muhājirūn*, and the *hijra* date that appears in the earliest Arabic documents from the time of the conquest indicate that the conquerors had some sense of shared (religious) identity, though what that was we do not really know.[82] Documents from the time of the conquest make no attempt to specify the invaders' religious identification with any precision.

The settlement of Muslims in Egypt should be considered at two levels: the capital Fustat and the rest of the country. Excavations in Fustat have shown that the small garrison camp initially inhabited by several thousand

[76] *CPR* VIII 82; provenance Fayyum. Cf. the orchard of the *amīr al-mu'minīn* (*pomarion tou amiral-moumnin*), *P.Lond.* IV 1434.33, dating from between 714–16, provenance Ishqaw.
[77] With caliph Walīd (ruled 705–15) (*CPR* III nos. 28–39). Caliph Mu'āwiya is mentioned in a protocol from Nessana (Grohmann 1960).
[78] Morelli 1998; Rāghib 1981. [79] Sijpesteijn and Donner (forthcoming).
[80] Michaelides Pap. Q 16. [81] Bashear 1997; Donner 2002–3.
[82] *Muhājirūn* referred in the Umayyad period to those who had moved to a garrison city to partake in the conquest wars (Crone 1994).

invading troops increased explosively in size in the next fifty years, extending to the north and east and soon boasting a permanent street plan that remained virtually unaltered into the Fatimid period.[83] While we cannot take the numbers given by our Arab literary sources at face value, a supposed increase from the *c.* 15,000 names on the first *dīwān* of Egypt under ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ to 40,000 at the time of Muʿāwiya does reflect the enormous increase in those making a claim to a share of Egypt's income, as do the discussions in the sources on who was entitled to a stipend.[84] The influx of Arab immigrants quickly led to the different tribal quarters becoming overcrowded.[85] The ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ mosque built to serve the new community of believers soon needed to be extended (672).[86] Public baths and markets as well as other public structures followed.[87] Egyptians moving to the centre of power from the countryside also added to the growth of the capital.[88]

Muslim settlement in the countryside was slower and more limited. Soldiers moving through on campaigns had to be billeted by the local population, though some garrisons might have been semi-permanently settled in the countryside as well,[89] and soldiers could be found grazing their herds in springtime before the summer campaigns.[90] Other Muslim officials moved through the countryside to supervise the collection and assignment of taxes. The personnel working for the state postal system were among the first (temporary) Arab settlers in the Egyptian countryside.

This movement of Muslims into the countryside was state-initiated; private settlement was much slower. The majority of Muslims continued to live in the garrison city of Fustat, where they received their military stipend based on their place in the register or *dīwān*, and were actively discouraged

[83] Scanlon 1994. A Muslim garrison was permanently stationed in Alexandria, and probably also in other towns (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 130; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.297–8).

[84] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 102, 316.

[85] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 102, 116, 123, 128. Cf. Kubiak 1987: 76–84.

[86] As was recorded in an inscription under the governor Maslama (*CIA* no. 541).

[87] The building of a bridge was commemorated in an inscription under the governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (cited in Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* III.485 = *RCEA* no. 8 = *CIA* no. 548). Private houses were allegedly used as administrative headquarters in the early city and a *dār al-imāra* was not built until the Abbasid period (Kubiak 1987: 129). Cf. the house that ʿUmar made available for a slave market (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 91), and the house and public bath that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz' sons Sahl and Suhayl inherited (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 91).

[88] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 126, 129. Both churches and synagogues were allegedly built for newcomers in Fustat (ibid. 132, 136; Kubiak 1987: 84).

[89] Arab soldiers claim to have resided for forty years in countryside villages: *P.Cair.Arab.* III 150, dated 709; provenance Ishqaw.

[90] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 141–3, esp. 142; Muʾizz, *al-Bahnasā* 43; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1.9, dated Jan.–Feb. 710, provenance Ishqaw.

from moving into the countryside and making a living from agriculture. Any converts who joined the Muslims at this time would probably also have lived in the capital, as local Christian communities no doubt took a dim view of conversion. According to the fifteenth-century Egyptian historian Maqrīzī, conversion took off only after Arabs moved into the countryside, became involved in agriculture, and started to intermarry with the Copts.[91]

Such a settlement pattern is corroborated by the narrative and documentary evidence. There are no reports of grants of confiscated or deserted land made after the conquest.[92] Only starting in the mid-eighth century do Muslim names appear in agricultural leases and other documents related to agriculture.[93] This is also the time when two groups of Arab colonists from Syria were settled in the Delta.[94] Arabic private letters datable to the seventh and eighth centuries indicate that Arabic-speaking Muslims had settled with their families in the countryside by that time.[95] Eighth-century lists of landholders include Muslim names, but whether these belonged to Arab Muslims or converts cannot be determined on the basis of these Arabized forms alone. This problem can be illustrated by an eighth-century letter written in Coptic by a certain Yazīd in the Fayyum to someone called Abū ʿAlī in Fustat. These native Coptic speakers took on Arabic names after their conversion to Islam.[96] Their ethnicity, made manifest by their use of their native Coptic language, would have remained hidden were their names to appear in a list of land-tax payers or a lease contract. The appearance of Muslim names in an eighth-century list of menial workers for requisitioned work, on the other hand, refers most probably to converted Christians.[97]

In theory, the incentives for conversion were obvious: association with the ruling elite and tax relief, as Muslims paid a lower land tax and no

[91] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.218–19.

[92] The Fayyumic village that the caliph Muʿāwiya allegedly gave to his son Yazīd had to be returned to serve the common good after complaints from locals (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 101).

[93] E.g., in a letter (Sijpesteijn 2004, dated 735), in agricultural leases (Diem 1984: 3, dated 778; 4, dated 793 or 794; 5, dating from between 775 and 776; 6, dated 796; *CPR* XXI 1, dated 785; 2, dated 792; 4, dated 796; provenance of all is Fayyum). Receipts record Muslims paying land tax from the second half of the eighth century onwards (*CPR* XXI, p. 64). Lists of landholders include Muslim names (all finding places are unknown: *P.Cair.Arab.* IV 217.3, 4, 5, 7, *CPR* XXII 34.1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, both dating from the eighth century; *P.Cair.Arab.* IV 218.3, 5, *P.Prag.Arab.* 22.5, 8, both dating from the eighth–ninth century).

[94] Kindī, *Wulāt* 76; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 143; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.214–15.

[95] The oldest Arabic commercial letter dealing with trade in wine and textiles was written in the seventh century from North Africa to a town in Egypt, possibly Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchos); Rāghib 1991: 1–10. From the eighth century, e.g. Sijpesteijn 2004; *P.Berl.Arab.* II 75.

[96] *CPR* II 228. [97] Gonis 2003b: 209–11.

poll tax. Converts in the early period, however, do not always seem to have enjoyed these privileges after conversion. A mid-eighth century fiscal register lists many names of fugitive Muslim peasants, suggesting that the fiscal burden rested as heavily on them as on their Christian neighbours.[98] The Egyptian governor Ḥayyān b. Shurayḥ (in office 717–20) was rebuked for levying the poll tax on converts.[99] *Muhājirūn*, Arab conquerors, and *mawālī*, converts or clients of Muslims, continue to be distinguished in the papyri of the eighth century. Whether this was an ethnic distinction or one based on precedence cannot be determined. While some of the *mawālī* might have arrived with the invading armies, others were probably Egyptian. The eighth-century *mawlā* accompanying a Muslim to the monastery of Bawit was almost certainly a native Egyptian whose knowledge made him a useful guide.[100]

The presence and influence of Arabic were obviously greater in urban environments and within the context of the bureaucracy. 'Abd Allāh's alleged introduction of a completely Arabic administration did not terminate the use of Greek and Coptic at lower levels of the administration, although the use of Arabic for official and private documents does increase from this time onwards. Early eighth-century accounts from the pagarchy of Ishqaw (Aphrodite) still show the costs for Arab *and* Greek scribes.[101] Arabic private letters are attested from the eighth century, but Egyptian converts often continued to communicate in Coptic or Greek, as has been mentioned above.[102]

The first Arabic Bible translation from the Coptic dates to the tenth century. Complaints about Egyptian Christians increasingly speaking Arabic instead of Coptic are preserved in a tenth-century literary text.[103] Judaeo-Arabic papyri from the ninth century indicate that Jews in Egypt had started to use Arabic by that time as well.[104] The ninth century also saw a significant increase in Arabic private correspondence. In two Arabic documents from Tutun from the tenth century, the parties to a legal transaction have the document 'read to them in Arabic and explained in the foreign language', i.e., Coptic.[105] These two documents perfectly capture the processes

[98] *CPR* XXII 34; provenance unknown. Fugitive Muslims appear in lines 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, and a deceased Muslim in line 2. Some of them are described as *mawālī* (ll. 6, 7).
[99] Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 156.
[100] They left a testimony in a Greek graffito (Fournet (forthcoming)). I would like to thank the author for showing me his article before publication.
[101] *P.Lond.* IV 1434.229, dating from 714–16; 1435.56, dating from 715–16.
[102] See nn. 100 and 104. [103] Samuel of Qalamun, *Apocalypse*, frag. 22r, 22v.
[104] Blau and Hopkins 1987. [105] Frantz-Murphy 1981: 1.15, dated 962; 2.14, dated 963.

described in this chapter: developments that in the one place seem to have reached a critical point have elsewhere not even started.

CONCLUSION

When the Islamic armies marched on Egypt, their aim was nothing less than comprehensive conquest. The direction and organization of this aim carried over into post-conquest Egyptian society. Byzantine administrators retained their role in the administration and in some cases even the very same positions. In this way the Muslims made use of the connections, experience, and administrative infrastructure in place, aloof from the indigenous population, leaving their soldiers free to continue the prosecution of Islam's conquest. At the same time, the Arab rulers thought it necessary to tighten up the administration through closer supervision in the form of an increased bureaucratic output and through the appointment of Muslims to monitor and contain the independence of Christian lower officials. This was a pragmatic response to the challenges of government and, when combined with a desire to align the system with 'Islamic' precepts, resulted in some fairly invasive administrative innovations.

Continuity of personnel was possible because the Byzantine elite survived the Arab conquest and was therefore available to continue their role in the Arab administration. The Muslim troops that 'Amr led into Egypt did not encounter effective resistance, and whatever dislocation the Muslim conquest caused, it does not seem to have resulted in large-scale emigration of the local population or in the confiscation of Egyptian land by the new rulers. With what seems to be minimal conversion following the conquest, the clear majority of Egypt's inhabitants continued to be Christians, speaking and thinking in Greek and Coptic, pursuing their established patterns of life. Byzantine culture survived, and Egypt remained a vital centre of commercial, military, and intellectual activity.

Both continuity and change, in other words, were part of the Muslim 'vision' of governance. Even though this 'vision' was not a grand master plan, neither were the continuities in the administration the result of an Arab ghost state lacking the infrastructure to supervise directly the financial administration of the country. Rather, Egypt's Arab conquerors, even with limited resources, had a prevailing sense of how they wanted Egypt run, on what their energies were best spent, what mattered and what did not. At the risk of retrofitting Egypt's past into a seamlessly progressive narrative, the astuteness of this intuition is vindicated by its success: several centuries later Egypt was a thorough-going Arab and Islamic polity.

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